



ASIAN HEALTH SERVICES

HEALTH CARE FOR ALL. ADVOCACY FOR THE UNDERSERVED.

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MEDIA RELEASE

ASIAN HEALTH SERVICES ANNOUNCES LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS

Service, Advocacy, and Excellence

OAKLAND, CA – Thursday, July 15, 2021 – Vance Yoshida, Chair of the Board of Directors of Asian Health Services, announced today key leadership transitions. Effective January 2022, Sherry Hirota, CEO, is retiring as CEO, Julia Liou has been appointed as incoming Chief Executive Officer, and Thu Quach has been appointed as incoming President of Asian Health Services.

“Asian Health Services has been blessed with one of the finest leaders in the AAPI Community and among the Community Health Centers nationally for more than 40 years,” said Mr. Yoshida of CEO Sherry Hirota. “From this strong foundation and excellence that Ms. Hirota has built, we are pleased to appoint new leadership with the talent, expertise, and passion to continue that excellence and also bring their own unique extraordinary experiences and accomplishments. The two newly appointed leaders have proven track records in health care, advocacy, and community impact. The appointees have served with Asian Health Services for more than a decade each, most recently as Chief Deputies of Administration.

Julia Liou, MPH, has been appointed Chief Executive Officer of Asian Health Services, effective January 2022. Ms. Liou currently is Chief Deputy of Administration at Asian Health Services, where she has served in various roles since 2000. Born to immigrants originally from Taiwan and Hong Kong, Ms. Liou has spearheaded key initiatives, programs, and departments at Asian Health Services, and in the Oakland Chinatown and Asian community, including the Revive Chinatown Project, and the California Health Nail Salon Collaborative. During her tenure with Asian Health Services, Ms. Liou has led the charge in strategic planning, development, the AHS Business Council, communications, advocacy and fundraising campaigns, and with cornerstone relationships. “Twenty years ago, I fell in love with AHS’ dual mission of advocacy and services,” said Ms. Liou. Whether forging coalitions or calling attention to neglected needs, fundraising for civic engagement or lifting up patient voices to change policies, she says, “I joined AHS with a deep desire to work in the AAPI community. I went on the clinic tour and in the patients I could see my own immigrant grandfather. He didn’t speak English, had a hard time finding a job, and was fortunate to have a provider who spoke his language given the health issues he faced. I have always wanted to carry forward to others the positive impact he experienced.”

In recent years, Ms. Liou has catapulted AHS’ development successes in donor gifts, capital campaign fund raising, events, and grants from government and foundations. She also leads planning and implementation of multiple agency strategic initiatives, ensures compliance with federal community

health center regulations and standards, and oversees public relations, branding, and communications. During the COVID pandemic, Julia collaborated with the Chief Innovation Officer and leveraged technology and government relationships to initiate a federal funding stream that seeds innovation and technology for community health centers nationwide. She has standardized AHS' federal compliance efforts, centralized credentialing of clinicians, and automated various internal processes. Ms. Liou earned her Bachelors of Art from Wellesley and Masters in Public Health from UCLA.

Thu Quach, PhD, has been appointed President of Asian Health Services, effective January 2022. Dr. Quach began at Asian Health Services in 1997 as a Community Health Educator, went on to earn her Ph.D. in Epidemiology at U.C. Berkeley and returned to AHS in 2011 where she currently serves as Chief Deputy of Administration. As a young child, Dr. Quach and her family immigrated as refugees from Vietnam. Dr. Quach is a nationally renowned researcher, with a focus on community-based research on Asian Americans and immigrant populations, including examining occupational exposures and health impacts among Vietnamese nail salon workers. Inspired by her mother who was a salon worker for decades before dying of cancer, Dr. Quach's research findings have contributed to the seminal work of the California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative, which has shaped policy changes and worker rights and safety. She has anchored a number of AHS' key initiatives, including starting up the Specialty Mental Health department, galvanizing national partners in the One Nation movement to fight anti-immigrant policies, and promoting patient engagement and empowerment. During the pandemic, Dr. Quach has been leading AHS in addressing racial disparities in COVID-19, including starting up a culturally and linguistically competent community testing site, contact tracing and vaccination program.

Dr. Quach has also been conducting groundbreaking research on COVID-19's impact on the AAPI population, and launched efforts to collect stories of language and digital barriers faced by the community during the pandemic -- asianamvoices.org. Stepping into her new role at AHS, Dr. Quach points to her lived experiences that mirror those of AHS patients, combined with her educational background of research and analytics, and as she describes herself, "with the grit of someone who honestly has lived through so much, I'm driven by a moral compass of humanity and justice." Dr. Quach earned her Bachelors of Art from U.C. Berkeley, Masters in Public Health from U.C.L.A. and Ph.D. in Epidemiology from U.C. Berkeley.

"Transition is about progress," said Ms. Hirota. "I am profoundly grateful for what has been almost a lifetime at the helm of Asian Health Services. True to Asian Health Services mission, values, and culture of community service and advocacy, this is ultimately all about the patients and community. Both of our new leaders are known and loved by our community. Ms. Liou and Dr. Quach, as key members of AHS' Executive Team for the past several years, have been instrumental in enhancing our community's access and rights to high quality health care. They each have impressive profiles of courageous and intelligent decision making, innovation, and management. These internal promotions reflect the Board and staff's confidence in their proven accomplishments, and support of their leadership going forward. I am honored to pass the reigns to such outstanding women, and look forward to Asian Health Services next exciting chapter.

The succession strategy has been a multi-year thoughtful process in which the Board and Succession Committee assessed the many issues and complexities of succeeding a founding executive of a cornerstone nonprofit. “We aimed to consider all the challenges of how one replaces stellar leadership -- how to build on that strength and foundation and not lose ground but get even stronger. We are confident that Asian Health Services is positioned well for facing future opportunities and challenges,” said, Linda Minamoto, Chair of the Succession Committee of the Board. Asian Health Services leadership began contemplating and planning succession more than twenty years ago. Ms. Hirota cited a mentor, Dr. Rolland Lowe, who laid early groundwork and galvanized a cohort of Asian community nonprofit executives in 2001. “We recognized the critical importance of succession as we all approached the twenty year mark in our respective organizations. Collectively and individually, we rose out of the Asian American movement decades earlier and we saw the need to intentionally create a ramp up for young leaders who shared both that fire in the belly for the community, and also professional expertise and experience,” Ms. Hirota said.

Sherry Hirota began at Asian Health Services (AHS) in 1978, when it was a storefront in Oakland Chinatown with nine staff. Ms. Hirota grew AHS into a nationally ranked federally qualified health center with a \$60 million annual budget, five main sites, and more than 450 staff members that serve 50,000 patients in 12 languages. Beyond a high quality community health center, Sherry Hirota built a powerhouse of advocacy and health care equity for Asians and Pacific Islander Americans, recognized on a local, state, and national level. For more than 40 years, Ms. Hirota has developed strategies, multicultural coalitions, and legions of leaders and followers in service to the vision that AAPIs matter and have a right to care and compassion in language and in culture.

Congresswoman Barbara Lee (CA-13), said, “Sherry has been a visionary leader, a woman warrior for the Asian American and Pacific Islander community, and a close and valued friend for more than 40 years. Not only has her work over the years made countless lives better – she has also done so much to advocate for and advance the cause of health and wellbeing as a basic human right. Thank you Sherry for your tireless advocacy and for your invaluable service as a proponent for underserved communities in the East Bay.”

“Our measure of success has been not only the number of patients who have access to high quality care, but the extent to which our patients understand and assert their right to that care,” said Hirota. With a focus on continuity of the organization’s stability, impact, and its high caliber performance, Ms. Hirota will continue on with Asian Health Services as Founding Executive. The transitions will take place in early 2022, when a celebration is planned to honor Ms. Hirota’s impact and legacy.

Asian Health Services is a federally qualified community health center in the East Bay. Founded 43 years ago, AHS provides primary health care services—medical, dental, and behavioral health—to low-income families in Oakland and Alameda County, serving 50,000 patients. Our staff are fluent in English and 12 Asian languages: Cantonese, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Korean, Khmer (Cambodian), Mien, Mongolian, Tagalog, Lao, Burmese, Karen, and Karenni. Our mission is to serve and advocate for the medically underserved, including the immigrant and refugee Asian communities, regarding their health rights, and to ensure equal access to health care services regardless of income, insurance status, language or culture.

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