

## **SF: ASSEMBLYWOMAN MA WANTS TO ERADICATE HEPATITIS B FROM THE CITY**

September 18, 2008

Assemblywoman Fiona Ma, D-San Francisco, said at news conference in San Francisco Chinatown's Public Health Center today that she is the one out of every ten Asian-American and Pacific Islanders that carry the Hepatitis B Virus and dreams of eradicating the disease from the United States.

At the conference that was laden by supporters and stakeholders of the campaign SF Hep B Free to rid the virus in the city, the U.S. Center for Disease Control released more strict testing recommendations to help further the Ma's goal. The center collaborated with consultants and experts to recommend ways to rid the potentially fatal disease that is passed through genetics and blood.

It recommends testing people who were born in Africa, Asia and other geographic regions with 2 percent or higher prevalence of chronic Hepatitis B Virus infections. Before today, the center had the same recommendation for regions with 8 percent prevalence.

It also recommends men who have sex with men and injection drug users get routine testing because they have higher prevalence of chronic Hepatitis B Virus than the overall population.

Ma passed a resolution two years ago to test and treat Pacific Islanders in San Francisco for the disease that can lead to liver cancer for a quarter of infected people.

"It's about saving lives," she said.

Many other groups such as Stanford University, Kaiser Permanente and a younger community outreach group, B a Hero, supported Ma today for the same reason.

A 17-year-old girl named Stephanie Shan, who was wearing a blue shirt with a Superman logo that replaced the "S" with a "B," said she joined an advocacy group when her father died from liver cancer, provoked by Hepatitis B one year ago.

"I was 16 and I didn't even know what the disease was," Shan said. "Now I'm here because I think it's really important that people get tested to prevent it from happening to other families."

Stanford University Global Community Health Coordinator Alena Groopman said the goal is to make policies and campaigns in San Francisco global.

"A lot of people who have it don't even know they have it," Alena said. "The first step is getting tested."

SF Hep B Free provides free testing and low-cost treatment for any Pacific Islanders living in San Francisco.