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(Somerset, NJ) - Assemblyman Upendra Chivukula (D-17) announced the release of the Community Resource Directory for South Asians - Health & Human Services in New Jersey by the South Asian Health Project. This Directory identifies a significant number of organizations and programs dedicated to improving quality of life for South Asians in New Jersey.

South Asians (including people of Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Indian, Nepalese, Maldivian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, and Indo-Caribbean descent), the fastest growing minority in the US, are facing an increase in poor health outcomes. Currently, South Asians bear a disproportionate burden of diabetes, heart disease, and obesity when compared to other ethnic groups. There is increasing evidence that health disparities in the South Asian community cut across immigration status, income, and education levels.

“This Directory will help in the South Asian community by increasing awareness and providing information to members of the South Asian community living in New Jersey. Health disparities in the South Asian community are often masked by cultural and societal factors. We as a community must overcome ignorance and provide the resources necessary. This project will aid in this struggle,” said Chivukula.

“It is important to know about the information and services available for South Asians, about our community strengths and needs, and about how to advocate for innovative programs that can support diverse cultural, linguistic, and religious understanding. The Health Project recognizes that eliminating health disparities requires a holistic approach,” notes Shazia Naz Anam, Founder of the South Asian Health Project. Funding for the South Asian Health Project is provided by the NJ Office of Minority and Multicultural Health and distribution of the directory is supported through the University of Medicine and Dentistry in New Jersey, Office for Multicultural Affairs.

The Health Project is the first community-based health initiative in the Northeast area with a mission to achieve health equity for South Asians through individuals and community empowerment. The Health Project has developed a series capacity building trainings for South Asian agencies based in New Jersey. The first will be held on April 5, 2006 and will feature a free 2-hour workshop that will provide skills and knowledge on how to build and sustain a not-for-profit agency. More information is available at www.southasianhealth.org.

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See more on Community Resource Directory for South Asians, New Jersey, March 2006