

# Press Release

## Manavi testifies before NJ Governor's Advisory Panel on Immigrant Policy

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Jersey City, NJ** – On June 11, 2008, Maneesha Kelkar, Director of Manavi, addressed the NJ Governor's Blue Ribbon Panel on Immigrant Policy which hosted a public hearing welcoming comments and suggestions from community organizations and members of the public in order to better integrate the growing immigrant population in New Jersey.

Kelkar's testimony spoke about the lack of information made available and linguistic and cultural barriers that prevent many South Asians from accessing critical social services including the law enforcement, healthcare and court system. She also addressed the negative impact of directives such as the NJ Attorney General's Directive 2007-3 on undocumented women reporting incidents of abuse. Kelkar also pointed out that the anti-immigrant sentiment coupled with the fear of deportation resulting from such ordinances has forced many South Asian women to stay in abusive situations.

Along with the aforementioned concerns, she also made some recommendations for the panel which include:

- Introducing a state-wide initiative to address issues around domestic violence, especially as they affect immigrants
- Improving language access to social services by increasing the availability and quality of trained and supervised language interpreters
- Improving cultural access to social services through the provision of cultural competency training about South Asian immigrant communities, for personnel providing crisis services as well as frontline personnel at government agencies in New Jersey
- Revisiting ordinances that adversely impact a section of the immigrant population
- Encouraging feedback from community leaders and practitioners in their respective areas of expertise, as well as from immigrants who have faced the impact of various policies

Manavi is a New Jersey-based women's rights organization that works to end all forms of violence against South Asian women living in the U.S. Through a wide variety of programs, Manavi ensures that women of South Asian descent in the U.S can exercise their fundamental right to live a life of dignity that is safe and free from violence. Some of our services include: individual counseling, legal clinics & referrals, support groups, court & medical accompaniments, and transitional housing. Manavi serves approximately 300 abused South Asian women each year with a variety of culturally competent and linguistically appropriate services, besides training mainstream agencies in cultural competency. For further information about Manavi, please visit [www.manavi.org](http://www.manavi.org).