

[House Appropriators Express Support for NCUIH Agenda at Hearing](#)

Category: News

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On May 16, NCUIH President Ashley Tuomi testified before the House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, which determines funding for the Indian Health Service (IHS). A copy of her written statement is linked [here](#).

In her oral statement, Ms. Tuomi thanked Chairman Ken Calvert (R-CA), Ranking Member Betty McCollum (D-MN), and Representative Tom Cole (R-OK) for their efforts to increase funding for the agency overall and urban Indian health programs specifically.

Earlier in the hearing, Representative Cole, lamenting that appropriations would never be enough to fully fund IHS, invited representatives of the American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) people to submit ideas for converting Indian health programs from discretionary to mandatory, so that they would be more like Medicare and Medicaid which are automatically funded based on eligibility. (the American Health Care Act, which passed the House earlier this month and is pending in the Senate, would undermine Medicaid's status by imposing strict limits on future federal funding.)

Representative McCollum demonstrated support for Ms. Tuomi's request that the Subcommittee direct the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) to fully implement its memorandum of understanding (MOU) with IHS to promote better care for urban AI/AN veterans, working with their colleagues who are responsible for determining funding for DVA. Currently, the MOU is only implemented for Tribal and IHS facilities. Representative Cole and Chairman Calvert indicated strong support for Ms. Tuomi's request that the Subcommittee encourage the relevant House of Representatives committee to include UIHPs in the Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA) so that they are not forced to divert precious appropriations to pay for expensive malpractice insurance.

In putting his weight behind NCUIH's position on FTCA, Representative Cole praised the work performed by UIHPs and singled out for accolades the Oklahoma City Indian Clinic which he had recently visited. (That's an excellent reminder about the value of inviting your lawmakers to visit your UIHP—the more Representatives and Senators know about our work the more support they will give us.)

Finally, all three lawmakers strongly supported Ms. Tuomi's recommendation to reauthorize the Special Diabetes Program for Indians before it expires at the end of September.

Here is a link to the hearing: <http://appropriations.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx...>

Ms. Tuomi's testimony begins at 1:26:13.