

Urban FMAP Fix Bill Introduced

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The National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH), which represents 41 urban Indian organizations (UIOs) with Title V contracts across the nation, appreciates the bipartisan legislation to be introduced by Representative Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM-3) and Senator Tom Udall (D-NM) to fix Medicaid for American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) patients who are served by UIOs.

Title V UIOs, which constitute an integral part of the Indian Health Service (IHS), are non-profit corporations which recruit and retain their own staffs in order to provide high-quality, culturally-competent health care to AI/AN people who live off of reservations.

"Medicaid is a vital health care program for AI/AN people," declared Ms. Ashley Tuomi, NCUIH's President. "Congress authorized all three parts of IHS to bill Medicaid for services provided to eligible AI/AN people in order to supplement chronic underfunding of IHS and thus better fulfill the federal government's Trust Responsibility to provide health care to AI/AN people."

"In recognition that it would honor the Trust Responsibility to AI/AN and stretch dollars for the Indian health system," continued Ms. Tuomi, who is also the CEO of American Indian Health & Family Services of Southeast Michigan, in Detroit, MI, "Congress provided that states would be reimbursed by the federal government at a Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) of 100. However, UIOs were not explicitly mentioned in the law, and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services states it lacks the discretion to authorize 100% FMAP for UIOs."

"That's why the legislation introduced by Senator Udall and Representative Lujan is so important," declared Ms. Linda Son-Stone, who is the executive director of First Nations Community Healthsource, in Albuquerque, NM. "It would simply include UIOs in the FMAP law, so that all three parts of IHS are treated the same with respect to Medicaid reimbursement. More importantly, it will allow UIOs to provide more high-quality, culturally-competent health care services to urban Indians, who currently experience health care conditions and outcomes that are markedly inferior to their non-Indian counterparts in urban areas."

"In fact," continued Ms. Son-Stone, "the two largest UIOs, in Tulsa and Oklahoma City, have been so successful in part because of a legal exception through which their state of Oklahoma already receives 100% FMAP. We appreciate the strong leadership of Representative Lujan and Senator Udall on this very important issue, which would allow UIO patients in New Mexico and other states to benefit from the same arrangement."