

# [NCUIH TESTIFIES BEFORE CONGRESS ON “NATIVE VETERANS’ ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE”](#)

Category: Policy Blog

written by NCUIH | October 31, 2019

On October 30, 2019, the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, Subcommittee on Health conducted an oversight hearing entitled “[Native Veterans’ Access To Healthcare](#)”. NCUIH Board Vice President and CEO of the Indian Health Center of Santa Clara Valley Sonya Tetnowski (Makah) testified before the Subcommittee with Rep. Brownley presiding.

“While we know Native Americans serve at higher rates than anyone else they also endure the lowest health status of anyone else. This is a national shame, and a terrible violation of the trust responsibility the United States government is obligated to uphold. We must do better,” said House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs Chairman Mark Takano.

“We serve, we protect and yet we struggle to have parity in the system. I’m sad to report that American Indians and Alaska Natives have the highest poverty rate and the highest uninsured rate of any veterans. Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs) provide high-quality, culturally competent care to urban Indians, which consists of 75% of all American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs). We ask that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) fully implement the VA and Indian Health Services’ Memorandum of Understanding (VA-IHS MOU) and Reimbursement Agreement for Direct Health Care Services. This action would allow UIOs to be reimbursed for providing healthcare to AIAN Veterans. Most AI/AN veterans live in urban areas and would benefit from the culturally competent care provided at UIOs,” said Sonya Tetnowski in her testimony.

## **More Information**

<https://veterans.house.gov/events/hearings/subcommittee-on-health-oversight-hearing-native-veterans-access-to-healthcare>

## **Panel One**

- Andrew C. Joseph Jr., Chairman of the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board, National Indian Health Board (NIHB)
- President, National Congress of American Indians (NCAI)
- Chief William Smith, Vice Chairperson, Alaska Native Health Board (ANHB)
- Sonya M. Tetnowski, Vice-President, National Council on Urban Indian Health (NCUIH)
- Chief Marilyn Malerba, Mohegan Tribe of Connecticut, Indian Health Service Tribal Self-Governance Advisory Committee (IHS TSGAC)

## **Panel Two**

- Dr. Kameron Matthews, Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Community Care, Veterans Health Administration

*Accompanied by*

- Dr. Thomas Klobuchar, Executive Director, Office of Rural Health, Department of Veterans

## Affairs

- Benjamin Smith, Deputy Director for Intergovernmental Affairs, Indian Health Service

Video