PRESS RELEASE: Federal Government Has Yet to Disburse Funds to UIOs

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written by Meredith Raimondi | March 17, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Meredith Raimondi, 202-417-7781, mraimondi@ncuih.org

UIOs have received no funding from COVID-19 emergency bill.

Washington, DC (March 17, 2020) – To date, urban Indian organizations (UIOs) across the country have yet to receive any federal funding from the $8.3 billion emergency supplemental appropriations to combat the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, despite having been specifically listed in the legislation. UIOs already have an immediate funding need for services and supplies to combat the pandemic, and as the urgency, infection rate, and death toll intensifies, UIOs will need more funding resources to protect and preserve human life.

"As Congress and the Administration is working hard to address COVID-19, we are gravely concerned about the timeline for funds and resources to Indian Country. We have seen urban areas be adversely impacted by this virus and our Urban Indian Organizations have yet to receive any funding from the Administration despite Congress including UIOs in the bill. Lives are at stake and time is of the essence for action as our programs are already tackling this crisis without the resources they need," said Francys Crevier, Executive Director of NCUIH.

The National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) partnered with the National Indian Health Board, National Congress of American Indians, Native American Finance Officers Association, and the United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund in a letter to Congressional appropriators detailing the need for UIO COVID-19 emergency supplies and services funding to be set at a minimum of $58-$94 million. UIOs receive primary IHS funding from only one line item in the IHS budget, which provides a mere $57,684,000 for urban Indian health. 41 UIOs that operate 74 health facilities in 22 states are thus faced with significantly constrained budgets.

With over two-thirds of the American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) population living in urban areas, UIOs fill a crucial gap in the health care system for AI/ANs that do not have access to more remote facilities run by the Indian Health Service (IHS). UIOs must receive this critical funding without delay so that they may continue to provide high quality care to their patients while also managing local outbreaks and minimizing risks to their communities.

UIOs already have an immediate need for access to the emergency funding appropriated by Congress, as many are located in some of the hardest-hit areas of the United States.

- The Indian Health Center of Santa Clara Valley, the UIO in San Jose, California, is at the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic, where it confirmed its first COVID-19 case on March 13 and cases have increased more than threefold in that area over the past few days. In Utah, the Urban Indian Center of Salt Lake has several patients who were exposed to COVID-19 through a March 9 event where a number of girls interacted directly with Utah Jazz player Rudy Gobert

(the namesake of Rudy's Kids Foundation) – who tested positive for COVID-19 two days later.
- The UIO located in Seattle, WA, an area currently experiencing a significant level of outbreak, is projecting a monthly loss of $734,922 during this pandemic.
- These are only a few examples of the impacts UIOs are already experiencing – yet they have not received any COVID-19 funding to date.

On March 6, H.R.6074, the "Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2020" (Act) became **law**. The Act provides $8.3 billion in emergency funding for federal agencies to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak, and includes at least $950,000,000 for states, localities, tribes, tribal organizations, and UIOs. A further proviso provides that "not less than $40,000,000 of such funds shall be allocated to tribes, tribal organizations, **urban Indian health organizations**, or health service providers to tribes" through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Grants or cooperative agreements with **urban Indian health organizations** will be to carry out surveillance, epidemiology, laboratory capacity, infection control, mitigation, communications, and other preparedness and response activities to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19, as well as to reimburse costs for these purposes incurred between January 20 and March 6, 2020.

NCUIH will continue to monitor this rapidly evolving situation, the ongoing health risks to AI/AN patients, and the urban Indian communities where they reside.

Letters and Press Releases

- Letter from NIHB, NCAI, and NCUIH to Pelosi and McCarthy (March 17, 2020)
- Letter from NCUIH to Native American Caucus (March 17, 2020)
- Letter from Native Organizations to Appropriators (March 14, 2020)
- NCUIH Letter to Secretary Azar from NCUIH (March 10, 2020)
- NCUIH Press Release: Congress Announces $8.3 Billion for Coronavirus with Funding for Urban Indian Organizations – NCUIH helped ensure Urban Indian Organizations were included in funding (March 8, 2020)
- NCUIH Press Release: NCUIH Urges Congress to Include Urban Indians in any Efforts to Address Coronavirus – Urban Indian Organizations must be explicitly included in emergency funding. (March 2, 2020)
- NCUIH Letter to Congress on Coronavirus (February 28, 2020)

Related Bills

- Senators Warren and Udall Unveil Bill to Guarantee Tribal Health Authorities Access to the Strategic National Stockpile
- Udall Sends Letter to President Calling for Coronavirus Economic Response That Focuses on Workers & Families

News

- NBC News Story: Woman says children who came into contact with Rudy Gobert being denied coronavirus testing (March 14, 2020)
- NCUIH in the News: Salt Lake Tribune – 'We Are Not Ready For This': Native American Tribes Struggle To Deal With Coronavirus (March 4, 2020)

Background

- **One Pager on UIO Needs for Coronavirus Response**

- View the emergency appropriations **bill**.

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The National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) is the national non-profit organization devoted to the support and development of quality, accessible, and culturally-competent health and public health services for American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs) living in urban areas. NCUIH is the only national representative of the 41 Title V Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs) under the Indian Health Service (IHS) in the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA). NCUIH strives to improve the health of the over 70% of the AI/AN population that lives in urban areas, supported by quality, accessible health care centers.