PRESS RELEASE: Congressional Native American Caucus Supports Policy Priorities Identified by NCUIH and Other National Native Organizations for Third Funding Bill

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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As Indian Country awaits funding, Congress continues to prioritize Native Americans and UIOs are keeping their doors open.

Washington, DC (March 18, 2020) – On March 17, 2020, the Congressional Native American Caucus sent a letter to the House Committee on Appropriations Chair Nita Lowey and Ranking Member Kay Granger urging the inclusion of tribal priorities in the third supplemental coronavirus package.

The request from the Native American Caucus incorporates a joint letter submitted by the National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH), National Indian Health Board (NIHB), and National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) (collectively, Native Organizations). The Native Organizations outlined the need to address critical funding and policy priorities to protect and prepare the American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities for COVID-19.

"We are encouraged by the attention of Congress to Indian Country as it continues to advance legislation to address this global pandemic. From Santa Clara Valley to Baltimore, our communities are ground zero for this health crisis, providing life-saving critical care without any additional federal resources to date. Despite a complete lack of additional federal resources, Urban Indian Organizations are doing everything they can to keep their doors open and ensure their patients and staff are safe. As this crisis continues to unfold, however, some programs are being forced to reduce hours due to funding shortages and potentially lay off staff to cope due to a lack of personal protective equipment. All Indian Health Care Providers are experiencing devastating impacts from this pandemic yet they continue to step up every day as operators on the front lines. The trust responsibility to Indian Country must not end in this time of crisis when it is needed most of all," said Francys Crevier, Executive Director of NCUIH.

The Congressional Native American Caucus letter provides that "[i]t is imperative that the requests of American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs) are thoroughly considered in the preparation of this package to reflect the needs of all 574 federally-recognized Native Nations and 41 urban Indian organizations (UIOs) in furtherance of the federal trust responsibility."

The Caucus further notes that "[t]he inclusion of these urgent recommendations is imperative for the health of tribal communities and their citizens as this unforeseen pandemic continues to escalate in the United States."

The priorities include requesting that Congress provide $1.1 billion in funding for the Indian Health

Service (IHS) Services Account – funding that is essential to meet the increased demand for health services and education, recruit providers, increase testing capacity, and address other needs of Indian Health Care Providers including UIOs, as well as enable them to secure medical supplies. In addition, Native Organizations requested Congress to ensure parity across the IHS system by extending the full Federal Medicaid Assistance Percentage to services provided at UIOs.

NCUIH Letter to Native American Caucus

Additionally, NCUIH sent a letter to the House Native American Caucus, advocating for the inclusion of Indian Health Care Providers, including UIOs, in emergency coronavirus legislation.

To date, UIOs have received zero federal dollars to combat COVID-19; yet, currently, at least 10% of UIOs have patients that have tested positive or are under investigation/quarantine for COVID-19 and the remainder have expended resources to prepare for the likely spread of the novel coronavirus to patients in their cities. NCUIH therefore requested a minimum of $58-$94 million in funding to be provided for emergency supplies and services for urban Indian organizations and parity among the IHS/Tribal/UIO system through Medicaid reimbursement and medical malpractice coverage.

- NCUIH's Coronavirus Resource Center
- NCUIH Coronavirus Legislative Tracker

Letters

- **Letter from Native American Caucus to House Appropriators** (March 17, 2020)
- **Letter from NCUIH to Native American Caucus** (March 17, 2020)
- **Letter from NIHB, NCAI, and NCUIH to Pelosi and McCarthy** (March 17, 2020)
- **Letter from Native Organizations to Appropriators** (March 14, 2020)
- **Udall Leads Bipartisan Group of Senators Urging Vice President Pence to Ensure Coronavirus Resources for Tribes and Urban Native Communities** (March 15, 2020)
- **NCUIH Letter to Secretary Azar** (March 10, 2020)
- **NCUIH Letter to Appropriators on Coronavirus** (February 28, 2020)

Press Releases

- **Federal Government Has Yet to Disburse Funds to UIOs** (March 17, 2020)
- **Congress Announces $8.3 Billion for Coronavirus with Funding for Urban Indian Organizations** (March 4, 2020)
- **NCUIH Urges Congress to Include Urban Indians in any Efforts to Address Coronavirus** (March 2, 2020)

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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.