

PRESS RELEASE: HHS Announces Action by CDC to disburse \$80 Million for Indian Country including Urban Indian Health

Category: Press Release

written by Meredith Raimondi | March 21, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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14 days after the supplemental bill was enacted, HHS announced action to disburse funds.

Washington, DC (March 20, 2020) - On March 20, 2020, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced action by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to provide \$80 million in funding to tribes, tribal organizations, and Urban Indian Organizations for resources in support of our nation's response to the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

"While the cities across the country are shutting down, our Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs) are doing all they can to stay open for the patients and communities. As UIOs have risen to the challenge without any additional federal funding to date, helping not only their patients but their counties, the timing of this is critical and will be essential to protecting the personnel who are risking their lives without proper protective equipment. This is an important step in the right direction to helping Indian Country mitigate this deadly virus. We must thank our leaders in Congress - Rep. Betty McCollum, Rep. Tom Cole, Rep. Markwayne Mullin, Rep. Paul Cook, Rep. Raul Grijalva, Rep. Ruben Gallego, Sen. Chuck Schumer, Sen. Elizabeth Warren and Sen. Tom Udall - who have been instrumental in ensuring this funding reaches the most vulnerable populations impacted by this pandemic," said Francys Crevier, Executive Director of NCUIH.

Current Status

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. Another UIO has had to reduce operations to two days a week. A UIO is also considering layoffs due to lack of PPE. And, one UIO has determined it must close for 30 days - with a handful of rotating staff (to minimize the potential for spread) providing telemedicine services only.

On March 6, 2020, H.R. 6074, Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2020 (Act) became law ([P.L. 116-123](#)). The Act provides \$8.3 billion in emergency funding for federal agencies to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak, including \$2.2 billion for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), of which not less than \$950,000,000 will be distributed via grants or cooperative agreements to states, localities, territories, tribes, tribal

organizations, urban Indian health organizations, or health service providers to tribes, and a proviso 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.” Grants or cooperative agreements with urban Indian health organizations will provide these funds 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 expended for these purposes incurred between January 20 and March 6, 2020.

Background

- [Letter from 23 House Members to Secretary Azar](#) (March 20, 2020)
- [Reps. Gallego, Cook, Grijalva, Cole, Haaland Demand the Immediate Release of Congressionally Approved COVID-19 Aid to Indian Country](#) (March 20, 2020)
- [HHS announces upcoming action to provide funding to tribes for COVID-19 response](#) (March 20, 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.