

PRESS RELEASE: Gallego, Mullin Introduce FTCA Bill to Reduce Burdens for Urban Indian Organizations

Category: Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The long-needed fix would allow urban Indian organizations to direct funds back to the patients who need it most.

Washington, DC (April 21, 2020) – Rep. Ruben Gallego (D-AZ) and Rep. Markwayne Mullin (R-OK) introduced H.R. 6535 last week to expand Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA) coverage to urban Indian organizations, giving them a desperately needed boost in resources as many suffer critical supply shortages, closures, and financial hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Urban Indian organizations (UIOs) are doing everything they can to keep their doors open during this pandemic while still dealing with paying for costly medical malpractice insurance. Unfortunately, urban Indian organizations may be forced to make extremely difficult choices – facing competing priorities and expenses like increased PPE prices, testing supplies, in addition to very costly malpractice insurance. H.R. 6535 would create parity within the Indian Health Service health system by extending FTCA coverage to urban Indian organizations, who currently are forced to divert resources away from health care in order to foot exorbitant liability costs themselves.

“We are extremely grateful for Congressman Gallego and Congressman Mullin’s leadership in introducing this legislation for a long-needed fix to the medical malpractice liability protection, which ensures parity for Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs). A single UIO can pay as much as \$250,000 annually, funds that could be spent providing health care for the American Indians and Alaska Natives they serve. As all other Indian Health Care Providers are covered by FTCA and Community Health Centers employees as well as volunteers are also covered, this legislative fix is critical to ensure continuity of health care in a time when it’s needed most,” said **Francys Crevier, Executive Director of NCUIH.**

“Urban Indian organizations, including Native Health in my District, are on the front lines of this pandemic. Individual facilities are reporting skyrocketing costs in the hundreds of thousands and dangerous supply shortages. Three UIOs have already closed their doors as a result of the strain,” **said Rep. Gallego, Chair of the Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples.** “We cannot afford to leave urban Indians without access to care during this public health crisis. My bill will both bring long overdue parity to urban Indian health providers and provide an infusion of desperately resources to an urban Indian health system on the brink.”

“Urban Indian Health Centers play a critical role in providing health care to Native Americans. Our bill ensures they are covered by the FTCA so that they won’t have to use their limited resources to cover costly liability bills. I want to thank Congressman Gallego for working with me on this legislation that will improve health care for Native Americans,” **said Rep. Mullin.**

Next Steps

NCUIH has long-advocated for the introduction of this legislation and will be requesting that lawmakers include it in the next COVID-19 package.

Background

- [Reps. Gallego, Mullin Introduce Bill Boosting Resources for Urban Indian Health Organizations](#) (April 20, 2020)
- [H.R. 6535](#)

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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.