

# **PRESS RELEASE: House Passes Latest COVID-19 Bill with \$64 Million for UIOs, 100% FMAP for UIOs for 1 Year, VA-IHS Fix for UIOs, and Third Party Relief Fund**

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **NCUIH also testified before the House Natural Resources Committee today on the HEROES Act.**

**Washington, DC (May 15, 2020)** - Today, the House of Representatives passed the latest iteration of COVID-19 legislation, the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act. This new stimulus bill totals over \$3 trillion and includes additional state and local government funding, additional health care funding including \$2.1 billion for IHS with \$1 billion for reduced third party billing collections and \$64 million for Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs), 100% FMAP for UIOs for 1 year, and VA reimbursement parity for UIOs. NCUIH's President and CEO of NATIVE HEALTH Walter Murillo also testified before the [House Committee on Natural Resources](#) Subcommittee on Indigenous Peoples on the HEROES Act today.

✘ "The COVID-19 pandemic significantly affects densely populated areas and UIOs are seeing high positive-testing rates. As our health workers are risking their lives every day, we need the federal government to ensure our frontline heroes receive the same protections as all other public health employees. There is more work to be done and we look forward to working with our elected federal representatives in Congress on ensuring the HEROES Act and future legislation provides urban Indian organizations the resources to address this crisis," said Walter Murillo in his testimony before the [House Committee on Natural Resources](#).

"NCUIH applauds the work of the House of Representatives to introduce this bill with a focus on helping Indian Country address this pandemic which is causing devastation in our communities every day. As NCUIH has been tirelessly advocating for Urban Indian Health in each package, we are appreciative of the inclusion of \$64 million for Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs), at least \$1 billion in funds to recoup the third-party dollars lost by UIOs and Indian Health Care Providers, 100% FMAP for UIOs through June 30, 2021, and a permanent fix for UIO services provided to Native Veterans. We look forward to working with our Senate champions to ensure these provisions are included in the final package and are hopeful for the addition of the essential parity fix of FTCA for UIOs," said Francys Crevier, Executive Director.

In his opening remarks for today's roundtable, Chair of the Subcommittee of Indigenous Peoples, Rep. Ruben Gallego stated, "Inequities are felt beyond the borders of our reservation. For example, urban Indians in places like Phoenix face their own unique challenges in getting access to care. Indian Country has suffered more than any other Americans during the H1N1 pandemic and Spanish flu pandemic a century ago - also because of federal government failures."

“Unmet needs have been estimated to be close to 32 billion dollars. Accordingly we strongly support increased funding for the system that includes emergency third party reimbursement relief fund and technical Medicaid and Medicare fixes such as the authorization of Medicaid reimbursements for Qualified Indian Provider Services,” said Kevin Allis, CEO of NCAI in his testimony today.

## Bill Highlights

- \$2.1 billion for IHS “to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and provide health services related to coronavirus”
  - \$1 billion to supplement reduced third party billing collections
  - Not less than \$64 million for Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs)
- \$2.1 billion for CDC “to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus, domestically or internationally”
  - \$1 billion for “necessary expenses for grants for core public health infrastructure for State, local, Territorial, or Tribal health departments”
  - Not less than \$100 million to “be allocated to tribes, tribal organizations, urban Indian health organizations, or health service providers to tribes”
- \$3 billion for SAMHSA “to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus”
  - Not less than \$150 million to “be allocated to tribes, tribal organizations, urban Indian health organizations, or health or behavioral health service providers to tribes”
- 100% FMAP for services provided through urban Indian organizations “from July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021”
  - **Note: this is only a temporary authorization of 100% FMAP for UIOs**
- Health inequities research: IHS “in coordination with Tribal Epidemiology Centers and other Federal agencies, shall conduct or support research and field studies for the purposes of improved understanding of Tribal health inequities among AI/ANs”
- VA reimbursement parity for UIOs serving dually eligible AI/AN Veterans

## Next Steps

The Senate is still working to develop its own iteration of the next coronavirus package, but Senate Republicans have yet to reach an agreement with Senate Democrats on its timing or content. NCUIH will continue to advocate for the inclusion of UIOs in the final package including the addition of the FTCA parity bill that was introduced in the [Senate](#) and [House](#), permanent 100% FMAP for UIOs, VA-IHS parity for UIOs, and the \$1.7 billion relief fund advocated for by NCAI, NIHB, and NCUIH.

## Background

- [HEROES Act](#)

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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.