

PRESS RELEASE: NCUIH Urges Congress to Take Immediate Action to Provide COVID-19 Resources for Indian Country at Hearing Today

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The last COVID-19 package was six months ago.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Washington, DC (September 30, 2020) – On September 30, Francys Crevier (Algonquin), Chief Executive Officer of the National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH), [testified](#) before the House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee to provide updates on urban Indian health impacts of COVID-19. In addition to Ms. Crevier, the Subcommittee heard from Kevin J. Allis, CEO of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), and Carolyn Angus-Hornbuckle, COO and Director of Public Health Policy and Programs at the National Indian Health Board (NIHB). The [hearing](#) highlighted the non-partisan commitment of this subcommittee to upholding and honoring trust responsibilities to Indian Country.

“[I]t is my duty today to convey to you the severity of this crisis and how it is impacting the Indian Health System including our 41 [urban Indian organizations]. The last time a law was enacted was six months ago, the CARES Act of March 27, 2020, where Indian Country received a mere 0.5% of the total funding. The pandemic continues to wreak havoc on Indian Country as our people are disproportionately contracting and dying every single day from COVID-19. Since mid-July alone, when I last testified, IHS has seen a 51% increase in infections. Positive rates among Natives are 3.5 times higher than rates for non-Hispanic Whites and hospitalization rates are 4.7 times higher. Last week, CDC reported Native children were among the 78% of pediatric deaths. Black and brown children are dying and no one is paying attention,” stated Francys Crevier, CEO of NCUIH.

“The need to examine and address the ongoing situation in Indian Country is apparent. Congress needs to understand the full impact of the pandemic on Native Americans, and how to better meet the needs of the communities you are testifying on behalf of in future relief packages. Since the beginning of the pandemic, I’ve advocated for personal protective equipment, or PPE, complete test kits, and other supplies to be made available to Indian health facilities and to Tribal governments. Without these items, Native Americans are unable to ensure their safety while receiving essential government services, such as health care, welfare checks, law enforcement services, and domestic violence assistance,” stated House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Chair Betty McCollum.

“I recognize that COVID-19 has hit Indian Country disproportionately harder than the rest of the nation, that the situation is dire, and that additional funding is needed not only to keep tribal governments and communities functioning but to save lives. If there was ever a time for the Subcommittee to hold firm in its non-partisan commitment to tribes, this is it,” stated House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Ranking Member David Joyce.

Ms. Crevier’s testimony focused on the current status of UIOs, including:

- The need for additional resources for testing and contact tracing with \$2 billion for IHS and \$64 million for UIOs;
- Equitable distribution of a COVID-19 vaccine once approved, with a minimum 5% set-aside for the I/T/U system;
- \$80 million in facilities funding for UIOs;
- \$1 million for a UIO infrastructure study;
- \$7.3 million annually for 3 years in behavioral health funds for UIOs; and
- \$20 million in telehealth and health information technology funds for UIOs; and a spend-faster anomaly to insulate UIOs and the entire I/T/U system from the dire consequences of a potential government shutdown.

Next Steps

The House released a new COVID-19 package this week. Discussions between the White House and Congressional leadership are ongoing, however, time is running out before Congress departs until after the election.

- [Watch Hearing](#)
- [Testimony of Francys Crevier](#)
- [Most Recent House of Representatives COVID-19 Package](#) (Released September 28, 2020)