

House Passes NCUIH Bill to Extend FTCA Coverage to Urban Indian Health Workers

Category: Policy Blog

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Today, the United States House of Representatives voted to pass H.R. 6535 to extend Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA) coverage to urban Indian organizations (UIOs), which would put a stop to having to divert scarce resources away from health care to foot exorbitant insurance costs. This bill was passed by unanimous consent under suspension of the rules and will now be referred to the Senate for further consideration.

"We applaud the House, especially Rep. Ruben Gallego and Rep. Markwayne Mullin, for their steadfast efforts to help urban Indian health workers get coverage like their other IHS and Tribal counterparts. We urge the Senate to move quickly to pass this law before the end of this Congress. As we battle this pandemic that is devastating Indian Country, this will be critical to save Native lives and will increase available health care services," said Francys Crevier (Algonquin), NCUIH CEO.

In August, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that across 23 states, cumulative incidence rates of lab-confirmed COVID-19 among AI/ANs are 3.5 times higher than for non-Hispanic Whites.¹ Also, according to CDC, COVID-19 hospitalization among AI/ANs were 4.7 times higher than for non-Hispanic Whites. As this pandemic devastates Indian Country, UIOs have been forced to make extremely difficult choices – facing competing priorities and expenses, like increased PPE and renovation costs, in addition to very costly malpractice insurance. As of November, "the Oklahoma City IHS Area now has the highest total number of cases" and the Oklahoma City Indian Clinic is one of the UIOs that pays the highest annual rate for medical malpractice insurance. If provided insurance parity with IHS and Tribal facilities, this UIO alone could direct up to an additional \$250,000 to patient care at a time when increased access to care is needed most.

This legislation has broad bipartisan support in both chambers and is endorsed by IHS. NCAI also has a standing resolution supporting this legislation, Resolution #PDX-20-038, "Supporting Extension of Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA) Coverage to Urban Indian Organizations."

Next Steps

H.R. 6535 will now be referred to the Senate for further consideration. On December 4, 2020, NCUIH and the National Congress of American Indians sent a letter to Congress to urge them to pass this bill before the end of the year and will continue to work with the Senate to encourage swift passage.

Background

- [H.R. 6535 One Pager](#)
- [NCUIH Signs Three Joint Letters Urging Congressional Action Before the End of the Year](#) (December 4, 2020)
- [NCUIH Bills on FTCA for Urban Indian Organizations Advance Out of House and Senate](#)

[Committees \(August 20, 2020\)](#)

- [NCUIH Vice President Testifies on FTCA Coverage for Urban Indian Organizations](#) (July 27, 2020)
- [Press Release: U.S. Senators Tina Smith and James Lankford Introduce Bipartisan Legislation to Expand Health Care Resources for Urban Indian Health Organizations Amid Pandemic](#) (May 8, 2020)
- [Reps. Gallego, Mullin Introduce Bill Boosting Resources for Urban Indian Health Organizations](#) (April 20, 2020)
- Press Release: [Reps. Gallego, Mullin Introduce Bill Boosting Resources for Urban Indian Health Organizations](#) (April 20, 2020)

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