

PRESS RELEASE: IHS Announces Medical Malpractice Coverage for Urban Indian Health Workers Following Enactment of NCUIH Legislation

Category: News, Press Release
written by NCUIH | March 26, 2021

Washington, D.C. (March 26, 2021) - On Monday, March 22, the Indian Health Service (IHS) [announced](#) the successful implementation of the Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA) to Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs) and their employees to the same extent and in the same manner as to Tribes and Tribal Organizations. The National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) has advocated for over 20 years for medical malpractice coverage for urban Indian health workers. With this essential change, a single organization can redirect up to \$200,000 annually to patient care.

Congressional champions Reps. Ruben Gallego (D-AZ) and Markwayne Mullin (R-OK), along with Senators Tina Smith (D-MN), Tom Udall (D-NM), James Lankford (R-OK), and Martha McSally (R-AZ), worked tirelessly to ensure this important fix to expand resources for UIOs. NCUIH legislation to provide coverage for urban Indian health workers passed late last year as a standalone bill with broad bipartisan support.

“During the pandemic, every dollar makes a difference for these critical organizations providing care to urban Indians,” said NCUIH CEO Francys Crevier (Algonquin). **“We applaud our Congressional advocates in helping stretch our limited resources to serve urban Indians at such a critical time. As [Natives continue to have the highest death rates in the world](#), the federal government must uphold its trust responsibility and continue to provide every possible opportunity to increase access to care.”**

“Federal tort law currently omits coverage for UIOs, and especially during the coronavirus pandemic, UIOs, like other already covered Tribal health facilities, need to have the peace of mind that they can utilize their funds for care, not court cases,” said Senator Lankford.

“Oklahoma City Indian Clinic has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars each year on liability insurance for our providers,” said NCUIH Vice-President and CEO of Oklahoma City Indian Clinic Robyn Sunday-Allen. “With this parity, we can now put every cent back into services. We applaud the leadership of Senator Lankford on helping redirect our limited resources back to patients and families who rely on our services now more than ever.”