

House Passes NCUIH Urban Indian Health Confer Bill

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WASHINGTON, D.C. (November 3, 2021) – On November 2, 2021, the House passed the Urban Indian Health Confer Act (H.R. 5221) with a 406-17 recorded vote. This bipartisan bill introduced by Rep. Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ-3), Rep. Betty McCollum (D-MN), Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK), Rep. Don Young (R-AK), Rep. Karen Bass (D-CA), and Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) would require agencies within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to confer with urban Indian organizations (UIOs) on policies related to healthcare for urban American Indian/Alaska Natives (AI/ANs).

“We are thankful for the passage of the Urban Indian Health Confer Act in the House today and particularly for the leadership of Congressman Raul Grijalva, Don Young, Betty McCollum and Tom Cole. Establishing proper urban confer policies across all HHS agencies has been long overdue and exacerbated amid the current public health crisis ravaging Indian Country. We welcome the federal government’s effort to further fulfill their trust and treaty obligation for all American Indians and Alaska Natives, including those residing in urban areas,” said Walter Murillo (Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma), Chief Executive Officer of NATIVE HEALTH and President of NCUIH.

“As an original cosponsor of this legislation, I believe this bipartisan bill will benefit Native peoples, particularly those who live and seek health care outside of tribal jurisdictions. This legislation will establish direct lines of communication for UIOs across all of HHS and ensure that urban Indian communities are aware of health care policy changes,” said Representative Young (R-AK).

“HHS’ failure to communicate with UIOs about healthcare policies that impact urban Indian communities is inconsistent with the federal trust responsibility and contrary to sound public health policy. The Urban Indian Health Confer Act will establish direct communication for UIOs across the entire department and ensure that urban Indian communities are aware of healthcare policy changes,” said Chairman Raúl M. Grijalva (D-AZ).

Background

The National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) has long advocated for the establishment of formal dialogue between HHS agencies and UIOs and has tirelessly worked with Congressional leaders to put forth a legislation to address this parity issue.

- [NCUIH Press Release: Congressional Hearing Highlights How Lack of Urban Confer Delayed Vaccine Rollout for Urban Indians \(October 6, 2021\)](#)
- [NCUIH Press Release: Bipartisan Urban Indian Health Confer Act Introduced by Grijalva,](#)

[McCollum and Cole \(September 10, 2021\)](#)

- [NCUIH Urban Confer Fact Sheet](#)
- [NCAI Passes Resolution to “Call for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary to Implement an Urban Confer Policy Across the Department and its Divisions.”](#)

Next Steps

The bill now awaits action in the Senate.