

[NCUIH-Endorses Bill to Elevate the Health Care Needs of Native Americans Within the Federal Government](#)

Category: Policy Blog

written by Jeremy Grabiner | January 21, 2022

On January 13, 2022, Representative Greg Stanton (D-AZ) and Representative David Joyce (R-OH) [introduced](#) the *Stronger Engagement for Indian Health Needs Act* ([H.R. 6406](#)). This bill would elevate the Indian Health Service Director to Assistant Secretary for Indian Health within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), increasing their authority within the federal government on the health care needs of the American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) population. The National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) worked closely with Representatives Stanton and Joyce on this legislation and supports their effort to bring better representation for the health needs of AI/ANs.

“The health of our people has suffered due to the failure of the government to uphold the trust responsibility of providing health care to all American Indians and Alaska Natives. The pandemic, which continues to devastate Indian Country, has made it clear that it’s time for the Administration to recognize the importance of Indian health by elevating the position of the Director of the IHS to Assistant Secretary,” **said Walter Murillo (Choctaw), President of NCUIH and Chief Executive Officer of Native Health, which is based in Phoenix, Arizona.** “We applaud Representatives Greg Stanton and David Joyce for their longstanding leadership to improve health outcomes for Native people and hope this change will usher in a new era where Indian health is a priority and not an afterthought.”

The bill has been endorsed by leading Native American advocacy groups—including the National Congress of American Indians, National Indian Health Board, and NCUIH. The bill was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources and the Committee on Energy and Commerce. It currently awaits consideration.

- [Representative Stanton’s Press Release](#)