# NCUIH Sends Letter in Support of the IHS Request to Detail Public Health Service Commissioned Officers to Urban Indian Organizations

Category: Policy Blog
written by Moira Stuart | June 10, 2022

On May 24, 2022, the National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) sent a letter to the Chairs of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, Representative Chellie Pingree (D-ME-1), and Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR), and to the Ranking Members Representative David Joyce (R-OH-14) and Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), expressing NCUIH's support for detailing Public Health Service Commission Officers (PHSCOs) to Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs). Detailing officers to UIOs would assist UIO personnel in providing skilled, culturally competent healthcare, help address workforce shortages, and increase collaboration across the federal healthcare system.

Amending the law would provide the Indian Health Service (IHS) with the discretionary authority to detail PHSCOs directly to a UIO to perform work related to the functions of the Service. Such authority would be comparable to the existing authority to detail Officers to Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA) contractors and compactors for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of their ISDEAA contracts (section 7 of the Act of August 5, 1954 (42 U.S.C. § 2004b). The bill would support the 41 UIOs that serve the 70% of American Indians and Alaska Natives that live outside of reservations. Currently, UIOs only get 1% of IHS funding, so to fully staff UIOs, Public Health Service Commissioned Officers need to be deployed.

The Biden Administration and IHS support this deployment of PHSCOs to UIOs by including the provision in their Fiscal Year 2023 budget. NCUIH urges Chair Pingree and Merkley and Ranking Members Joyce and Murkowski to support this provision in the 2023 budget, and if not feasible, to support this provision in the next budget or in a stand-alone bill.

- NCUIH Letter of Support to House Approps on IHS CJ Proposal for PHSCO for UIOs
- NCUIH Letter of Support to Senate Approps on IHS CJ Proposal for PHSCO for UIOs

## Background

Section 215 of the Public Health Service Act (PHSA) authorizes the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) to detail officers to federal agencies and state health or mental health authorities. While UIOs have requested that officers be detailed to them to fill many roles related to the functions of the Public Health Service, subsection (c) of Section 215 (42 U.S.C. 215(c)) prevents UIOs from receiving detailed officers because they do not fall within the requirement that non-profits eligible for detailing be educational or research non-profits, or non-profits engaged in health activities for special studies and dissemination of information." UIOs do not qualify under the current statutory language. Changing this language would allow IHS to detail officers to UIOs to perform work related to the functions of the Indian Health Service.