

NCUIH Policy News: 3 More Urban Confers in June and More

Category: Policy Blog

written by NCUIH | June 13, 2022

Welcome to our new Policy Updates! Below are some key dates to keep in mind. The upcoming schedule can also find be found [here](#).

June Urban Confer Schedule

- 6/23 at 3pm - 4pm ET - Infrastructure Study Findings ([Registration Link](#))
- 6/29 at 2:30pm - 4 pm ET - Urban Indian Interagency Workgroup ([Registration Link](#))
- 6/30 at 2:30pm - 4 pm ET - OUIHP Strategic Plan ([Registration Link](#))

NCUIH Prep Calls and Focus Groups

NCUIH will host prep calls ahead of the confers. (We are still waiting for Dear Urban Leader Letters from OUIHP for the confers.)

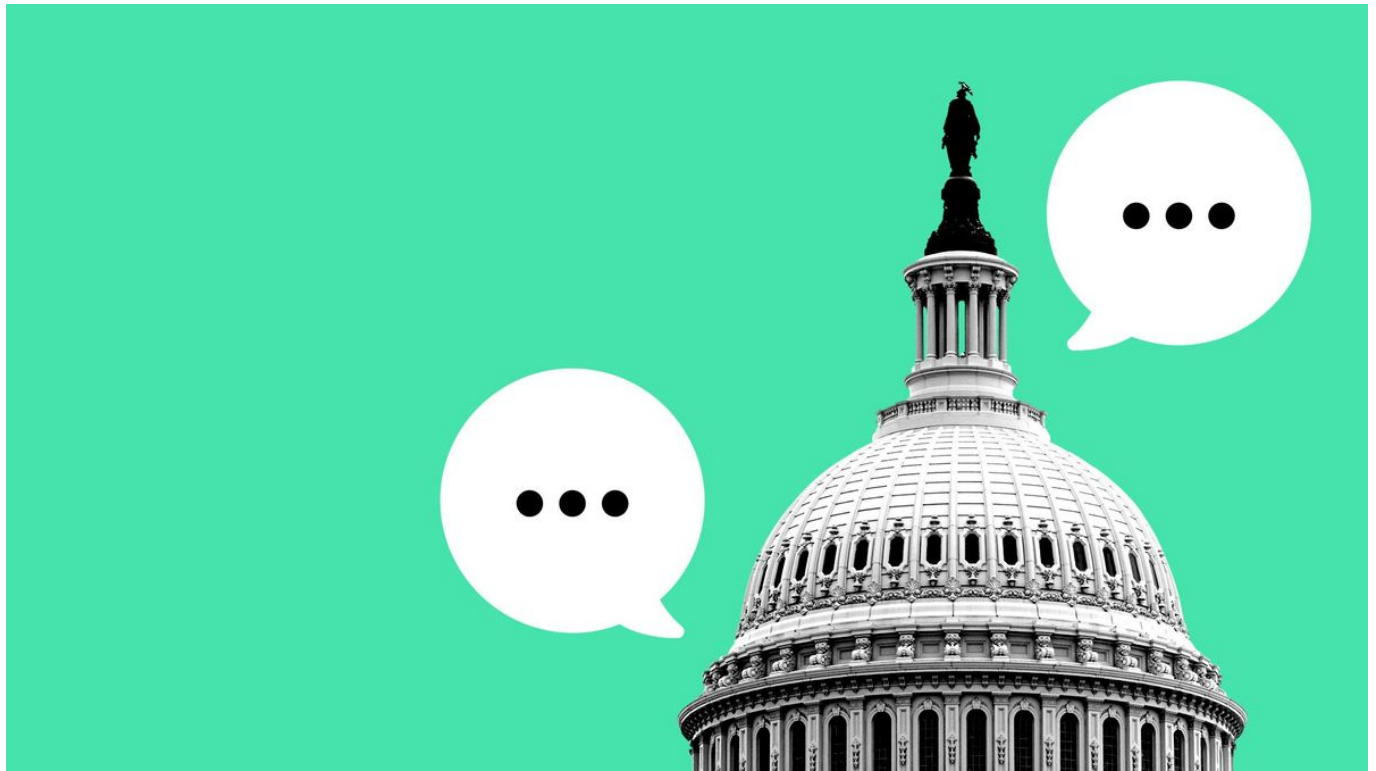
- 6/23 at 2 pm - 3 pm ET - Infrastructure Study ([Zoom Link](#))
- 6/27 at 1 pm - 2:30 pm ET - Urban Indian Interagency Workgroup and OUIHP Strategic Plan ([Zoom Link](#))
- 6/28 at noon - 1pm ET - NCUIH UIO AIR Check-In ([Zoom Link](#))

Upcoming Urban Confer Comment Deadlines

- 6/20 - Urban Indian Health Policy Chapter 19 ([DULL](#))
- 7/10 - Urban AIR ([DULL](#))

Let's dive in.

1 Big Thing: Bipartisan Urban Indian Health Confer Act Introduced



NCUIH has been working with Congress to establish a formal confer policy with UIOs and federal agencies.

On May 26, 2022, Senators Tina Smith (D-MN) and James Lankford (R-OK) introduced the *Urban Indian Health Confer Act* ([S. 4323](#)).

The big picture: The legislation would require the Department of Health and Human Services to confer with urban Indian organizations (UIOs) on policies and initiatives regarding health care for the over 70% of American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs) living off of reservations.

- NCUIH worked closely with Senators Smith and Lankford on the introduction of this Senate companion bill to [H.R. 5221](#), which [passed](#) the House of Representatives by 406 to 17 in November.

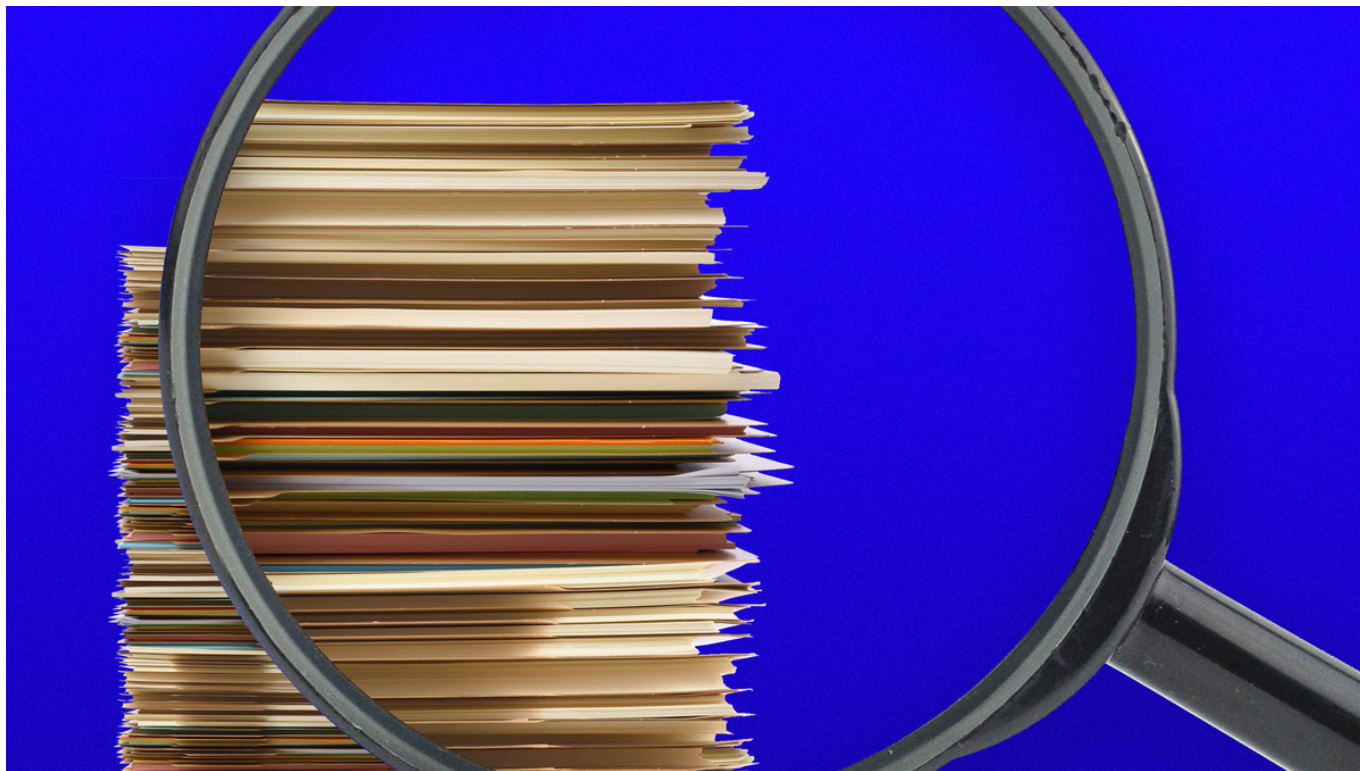
What they're saying: At a hearing on October 5, 2021, HHS explained that rollouts of COVID-19 vaccines were delayed to urban Indians due to a lack of an urban confer policy.

What's next: The bill was referred to the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. It awaits consideration.

Action item: Please get in touch with your Senator to ask them to request that the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to move forward on this legislation.

Go deeper: [Bipartisan Urban Indian Health Confer Act Introduced by Senators Smith and Lankford](#)

2. Federal Relations: NCUIH submits comments on MMIP and SDPI



Recent Comments

MMIP: On Friday, NCUIH submitted [comments](#) to IHS on MMIP and recommended the following:

- HHS must honor EO 14053 through timely, consistent, and clear communication, as well as collaboration, with UIOs
- HHS must include UIOs as Critical Stakeholders in HHS' Comprehensive Plan
- Increase access to technical assistance to UIOs for sexual assault nurse training
- Support UIOs in developing victim advocacy programs
- HHS should support improved data collection and reductions in misclassification of urban AI/ANs in relevant data
- Support inclusion of AI/AN and tribal affiliations on intake forms
- HHS should develop an Urban Confer Policy

(Read [comments](#).)

SDPI: On May 16, 2022, NCUIH [submitted comments](#) and recommendations to the IHS about [the Special Diabetes Program for Indians \(SDPI\)](#).

- In the comments, NCUIH emphasized the importance of SDPI and its impact in reducing health disparities related to diabetes for AI/AN populations. NCUIH also proposed recommendations for fiscal year (FY) 2023 including an increase in funding to at least \$250 million with built-in automatic annual medical inflationary increases and additional support for UIOs seeking supplemental funding sources for diabetes-related care.

(Read [comments](#).)

3. Legislative news: Approps testimony, Commissioned Officers for UIOs, Long COVID legislation



[NCUIH Submits Written Testimony to Senate Appropriations Subcommittee with FY 2023 Budget Requests for Urban Indian Health](#)

In the testimony, NCUIH requested the following:

- Fully fund IHS at \$49.8 billion and Urban Indian Health at \$949.9 million for FY23 (as requested by the Tribal Budget Formulation Workgroup)
- Advance appropriations for IHS until mandatory funding is enacted
- Increase funding for Electronic Health Record Modernization
- Increase funding to \$30 million for Good Health and Wellness in Indian Country (GHWIC)
- Permanently reauthorize Native Connections (Tribal Behavioral Health Grant)
- Include urban Indians in the language for all health programs
- Include UIOs in critical opioid grants

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

Why it matters: Detailing officers to UIOs would aid UIOs in providing skilled, culturally competent healthcare, help address workforce shortages, and increase collaboration across the federal healthcare system.

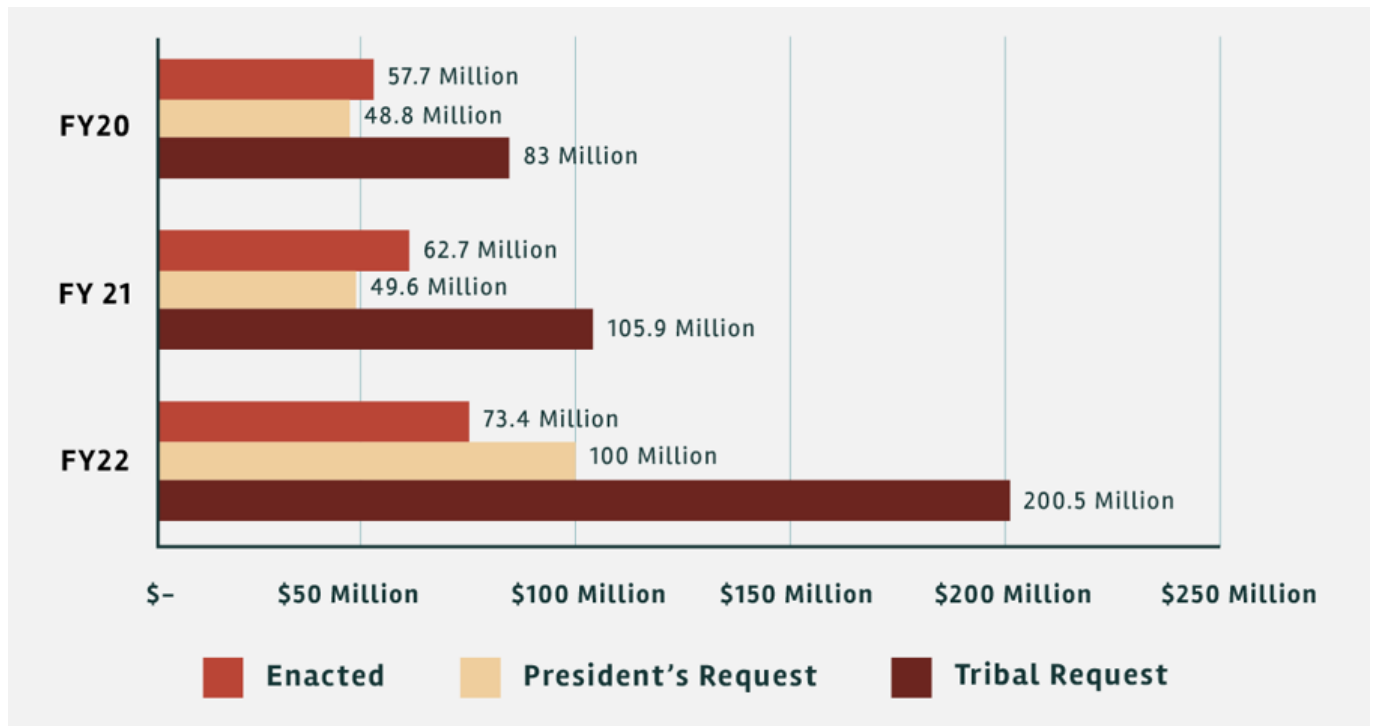
[NCUIH Endorses Bicameral Bill that Extends Grants to Urban Indian Organizations to Treat Long COVID](#)

- On April 7, 2022, Representative Ayanna Pressley (D-MA-07) and Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) [introduced](#) the bicameral *Targeting Resources for Equitable Access to Treatment for Long COVID (TREAT Long COVID) Act* ([H.R. 7482/S. 4015](#)) to increase access to medical care

and treatment for communities and individuals struggling with Long COVID.

- Specifically, this legislation would establish a grant program for eligible entities, including urban Indian organizations (UIOs) for creating or enhancing the capacity to treat patients with Long COVID through a multidisciplinary approach.

4. New Resource: Funding for Urban Indian Health FY2020-2022



NCUIH recently released a [one-pager](#) showcasing the history of funding for the urban Indian health line item of the Indian Health Service (IHS) budget.

- This document shows a graph of the Tribal Budget Formulation Workgroup Request, President's Budget Request, and enacted funding amounts for urban Indian health for fiscal years 2020, 2021, and 2022.
- Unfortunately, year after year, the Tribal Budget requests have gone largely ignored as evidenced in this resource.
- The graphs are intended to convey how far we need to go to begin meeting the health care needs of all American Indians/Alaska Natives (AI/AN).

[\(Resource\)](#)

In the news: Tribal Mental Health Gets New Focus, But Equity Barriers Remain ([Bloomberg](#))

- **Our thought bubble:** Always good to see coverage on equity barriers, but a failure to mention UIOs and the 70% of Native people off-reservation in a “deep dive” article is disappointing.