Urban Indian Health Policy Updates: Pushing for stable IHS funding, 2 urban confers this week

Category: Policy Blog
written by NCUIH | June 27, 2022

This week marks the end of a busy month with a record of 4 urban confers!

Here's a preview of what's coming up this week:

- Monday, June 27 at 2:00 – 3:30 p.m. ET (**NOTE: NEW TIME**) – NCUIH Prep Session for Confers: Inter-Agency Workgroup and OUIHP Strategic Plan (Zoom Link)
- Tuesday, June 28 at 1pm-2pm ET – NCUIH UIO FMAP Check-In (Zoom link.)
- Tuesday, June 28 at 1:30pm – 3:30pm ET – HHS, USDA, and White House to Host Tribal Consultation on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health (Register here.)
- Wednesday, June 29 at 10am ET – House Markup of IHS Budget Bill for FY23 (More info and hearing link.)
- Wednesday, June 29 at 2:30 – 4pm ET – Urban Confer on Urban Indian Interagency Workgroup (Register here.)
- Thursday, June 30 at 2:30 – 4:00pm ET – Urban Confer on OUIHP Strategic Plan (Register here.)

One more thing: Last week, at the Urban Confer on Infrastructure Study Funding, UIOs informed IHS that more information is needed on the existing infrastructure study to inform a decision on how to spend new funding. Unfortunately, IHS noted if the funding is not used for infrastructure, it must be redirected to "Direct Operations." Comments are due on August 23, 2022. (*Upcoming Urban Confers and Comments*)

1 Big Thing: Native organizations push forward on securing stable funding for the Indian Health Service

Last week, NCUIH sent a letter to Speaker Nancy Pelosi to request stable funding for the Indian Health Service (IHS) through Advance Appropriations until mandatory funding is implemented. (*Letter*)

- NIHB and NCAI are advocating to Congress for Advance Appropriations. (*Action Alert*)
- Advance Appropriations has support from over 2 dozen Members of the House of Representatives.
- **We need you!** We are calling on Native health advocates to contact the Speaker today! (*Action Alert*)

Last week, the House Appropriations Committee released the draft fiscal year 2023 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies funding bill and held a markup. The legislation includes funding for programs for the Indian Health Service (IHS).

- At the markup for this bill, Congresswoman Betty McCollum, who previously introduced the

Advance Appropriations bills, noted that there are outstanding concerns with the bill because it does not contain the budget certainty for IHS requested by Tribal leaders and Native organizations.

What's next: The full Committee meets Wednesday morning so time is of the essence to contact Speaker Pelosi to take action.

In related news: The House proposed urban Indian health line item amount is expected to be released tomorrow.

2. House passes landmark mental health bill

Last week, the House of Representatives passed a monumental bill to address mental health called the Restoring Hope for Mental Health and Well-Being Act of 2022.

Why it matters: This bill contains at least $1.8 billion in grants that are eligible for Urban Indian Organizations.

Go deeper: NCUIH worked closely with Congress to include reauthorization of Native Connections, which expires in September, and the inclusion of UIOs in Native opioid grants.

What's next: NCUIH will advocate to the Senate to retain Native health provisions and hopes to enhance funding for additional Native behavioral health resources.

(*House passes package addressing mental health*)

3. On our radar: White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health Tribal Consultation Session

The Tribal Consultation is being hosted on June 28, 2022, from 1:30-3:30pm EDT by the White House Domestic Policy Committee (DPC), the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). (*Dear Tribal Leader Letter*)

To register, visit this link. Written feedback is encouraged and can be submitted to consultation@hhs.gov.

The big picture: These departments are seeking input on strategies to successfully develop and implement a national strategy on hunger, nutrition and health. Specifically, they are seeking input on how to best do the following:

1. Improve food access and affordability: End hunger by making it easier for everyone — including urban, suburban, rural, and tribal communities — to access and afford food. For example, expand eligibility for and increase participation in food assistance programs and improve transportation to places where food is available.
2. Integrate nutrition and health: Prioritize the role of nutrition and food security in overall health, including disease prevention and management, and ensure our health care system addresses the nutrition-related needs of all people.
3. Empower all consumers to make and have access to healthy choices: Foster environments that

enable all people to easily make informed healthy choices ¾ increase access to healthy food, encourage healthy workplace and school policies, and invest in public messaging and education campaigns that are culturally appropriate and resonate with specific communities.
4. Support physical activity for all: Make it easier for people to be more physically active ¾ in part by ensuring everyone has access to safe places to get active ¾ increase awareness of the benefits of physical activity, and conduct research on and measure physical activity.
5. Enhance nutrition and food security research: Improve nutrition metrics, data collection, and research to inform nutrition and food security policy, particularly on issues of equity, access, and disparities.

4. From the blog: NCUIH Submits Comments on HIT Modernization, MMIP, Testimony on Indian Health budget

NCUIH Submits Comments to IHS on Resource and Patient Management System Replacement and Health Information Technology Modernization Focus Groups

- On June 3, 2022, the NCUIH submitted comments and recommendations to the Indian Health Service (IHS) about Health Information Technology (HIT) Modernization Governance regarding the replacement of the Resource and Patient Management System (RPMS).
- NCUIH recommended IHS ensure focus groups are representative of the entire IHS/Tribal/Urban Indian Organization (I/T/U) system.

NCUIH Submits Written Testimony to Senate Interior Appropriations with FY23 Budget Requests for Urban Indian Health

- NCUIH submitted public witness written testimony to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies regarding Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 funding for Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs) in response to the Subcommittee Hearing, "A Review of the Fiscal Year 2023 President's Budget for the Indian Health Service," held on May 11, 2022.
- NCUIH advocated in its testimony for additional resources for the Indian Health Service and urban Indian Health including $49.8 billion for the Indian Health Service (IHS) and $949.9 million for Urban Indian Health for FY23 (as requested by the Tribal Budget Formulation Workgroup) and advance appropriations for IHS until mandatory funding is enacted.

NCUIH Submits Comments to HHS about Missing and Murdered Indigenous People and Violent Crime Against Native People

- On May 19, 2022, NCUIH submitted comments and recommendations to Health and Human Services (HHS) about Executive Order (EO) 14053— Improving Public Safety and Criminal Justice for Native Americans and Addressing the Crisis of Missing or Murdered Indigenous People.
- NCUIH outlined recommendations for HHS including communication and collaboration with UIOs, engagement with UIOs as critical stakeholders in HHS' comprehensive plan to address the MMIP Crisis and violent crime, and the establishment of an agency-wide Urban Confer policy.

5. One last thing: Senate hears considers bill on Indian boarding schools



On Wednesday, the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs held an Oversight Hearing on "Volume 1 of the Department of the Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report" & Legislative Hearing to receive testimony on S. 2907, a NCUIH-endorsed bill to establish a Truth and Healing Commission.

The big picture: Interior Secretary Deb Haaland advocated for a Truth and Healing Commission to examine past U.S. government efforts to eradicate the languages, identities, and cultural practices of American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians.

(*The U.S. is reckoning with its troubled past of Indian boarding schools*)

Coming up: On July 10, 2022, comments are due on a proposed urban all-inclusive rate. Share your thoughts with NCUIH tomorrow, June 28 at 1pm-2pm ET during the NCUIH UIO FMAP Check-In (Zoom link.) (*Upcoming Urban Confers and Comments*)