

Resource Update: America's Disproportionate Investment in Healthcare for American Indians and Alaska Natives

Category: Policy Blog

written by River Carroll | January 10, 2024

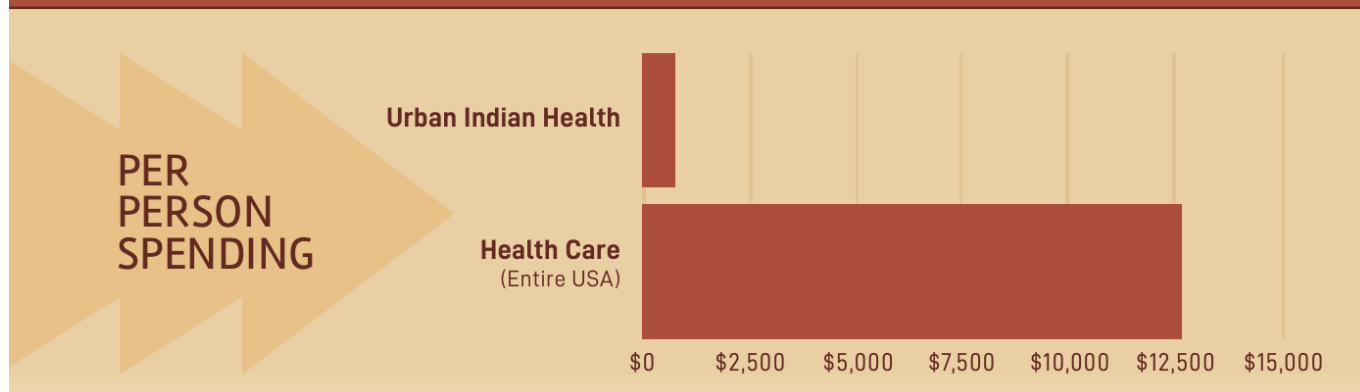
The National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) recently updated its resource document showcasing the disproportionate gaps in national healthcare investment for American Indian and Alaska Native people. The Indian Health Service (IHS) and Urban Indian Health budgets have long been underfunded. NCUIH's research reveals a significant gap in funding for Urban Indian Health services. Specifically, for patients served by urban Indian organizations, the allocated funds amounted to just \$891 per American Indian/Alaska Native patient from the IHS Urban Indian line item. This substantial difference between the overall healthcare expenditure and the funds designated for urban Indian populations raises critical questions about the equitable distribution of resources. In 2021, the United States witnessed a 2.7% growth in healthcare spending, reaching an astonishing \$4.3 trillion, equivalent to \$12,914 per person, according to findings by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

U.S. health care spending grew **2.7%** in 2021, reaching **\$4.3 trillion** or **\$12,914** per person¹

For urban IHS patients, urban Indian organizations received just **\$891** per American Indian/Alaska Native patient from the IHS Urban Indian line item²

The Declaration of National Indian Health Policy in the Indian Health Care Improvement Act States:

"Congress declares that it is the policy of this Nation, in fulfillment of its special trust responsibilities and legal obligations to Indians to ensure the highest possible health status for Indians and urban Indians and to provide all resources necessary to effect that policy."



The disparities in healthcare spending underscore the pressing need for a comprehensive review of funding mechanisms to address the unique healthcare challenges faced by American Indian and Alaska Native people in urban settings. NCUIH calls on policymakers, healthcare stakeholders, and the public to join in the effort to ensure that healthcare spending aligns with the federal trust responsibility to provide quality healthcare for all American Indian and Alaska Native people.