

# **NCUIH Urges Congressional Leadership to Reauthorize the Special Diabetes Program for Indians to Combat Diabetes in Native Communities**

Category: Policy Blog

written by Carrie Kowalyk | December 17, 2024

On November 19, 2024, the National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) sent a [letter](#) to Senate Majority Leader, Chuck Schumer, Senate Minority Leader, Mitch McConnell, Speaker of the House, Mike Johnson, House Minority Leader, Hakeem Jeffries requesting the reauthorization of the Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI) at a minimum of \$160 million per year. The program is set to expire on December 31, 2024.

SDPI is a highly effective program that funds life-saving efforts to fight diabetes and improve long-term health outcomes. SDPI has provided grants to 31 Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs) that enables them to provide necessary services to reduce the incidence of diabetes-related illness among urban Native communities.

## **Full Letter**

Dear Speaker Johnson, Minority Leader Jeffries, Majority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader McConnell:

On behalf of the National Council of Urban Indian Health, a national representative advocating for the 41 Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs) contracting with the Indian Health Service (IHS) under the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA), we echo the [55 bipartisan senators](#) in requesting your support to reauthorize the Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI) before the program expires on December 31, 2024 at a minimum of \$160 million per year. This bipartisan, highly effective program funds life-saving efforts to fight diabetes and is critical to improving long-term health outcomes in Indian Country.

Through SDPI, the 31 Urban Indian Organization grant recipients receive the resources needed to address the disproportionate burden of diabetes in our communities. In 2021, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported that American Indian and Alaska Native adults were [1.6 times](#) more likely than non-Hispanic whites to die from diabetes. The CDC also reported in 2023 that American Indian and Alaska Native adults were [1.5 times](#) more likely to be diagnosed with diabetes than non-Hispanic white Americans. Over the several decades SDPI has been funded, data has shown significant improvements from the program, and it is advancing health care quality and access for Tribal communities.

SDPI provides culturally competent care, funds life-saving efforts to fight diabetes at Indian Health Services facilities (including 31 Urban Indian Organizations) and is critical to improving long-term health outcomes in Indian Country. The Program for serves [780,000 American Indians and Alaska Native people across 302 programs in 35 states](#). SDPI enables UIOs to provide necessary services that reduce the incidence of diabetes-related illness among urban Indian communities. SDPI focuses on providing a culturally informed and community-directed approach to treating and preventing

Type 2 diabetes for American Indian and Alaska Native people. The highly successful, bipartisan program is a proven success, and reauthorization should be a top priority for Congress.

Unless the Speaker of the House and the Senate Majority Leader prioritize reauthorizing this critical program, it will expire on December 31, 2024, resulting in diminished type 2 diabetes care for thousands of American Indian and Alaska Native people. This program is highly successful, bipartisan, and has proven to be a worthwhile financial investment of taxpayer dollars.

The future of this successful program is in the hands of Congress. Reauthorizing the SDPI program must be a top priority in December.

## **Background and NCUIH Advocacy**

On October 23, 2024, NCUIH sent a [policy alert](#) to UIO leaders to contact Congress and urge members to sign onto the House and Senate Dear Colleague letters in support of SDPI reauthorization. On November 12, 2024, 55 Senators sent a [letter](#) to Senate Leadership requesting the vital Special Diabetes Program and Special Diabetes Program for Indians be reauthorized before funding expires on December 31, 2024. On December 6, 2024, 198 House Representatives sent a Dear Colleague [letter](#) to Speaker Mike Johnson and House Minority Leader, Hakeem Jefferies, for SDP and SDPI reauthorization.