

Action Alert: Contact Congress to Protect Indian Health System Funding

Category: Policy Blog

written by NCUIH | February 4, 2025

Dear Advocates,

We need your help contacting Congress today!

Last week, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) released a memorandum that temporarily froze resources critical to the operation of Tribal health care and Urban Indian Organization (UIO) facilities. While the recent OMB memorandum has been rescinded, NCUIH remains concerned about potential future impacts on the Indian health system. This is why we need your help to letting Congress know that it is critical that Indian health system funding is protected from any future disruptions.

Why is this important?

1. The U.S. Government has a legal obligation to provide health services to Native people, as established by the Indian Health Care Improvement Act.
2. Recent [funding uncertainties](#) forced UIOs to consider staffing cuts, service suspensions, and even facility closures.
3. Past experience shows any disruption in funding can have grave consequences on the Indian health system. During the 2019 government shutdown, funding disruptions led to reduced services and facility closures, resulting in tragic consequences including fatal opioid overdoses in some communities.
4. Specific Exemption Request: NCUIH is calling for a specific exemption for the entire Indian Health System, including the Tribal organizations, and UIOs, from any future funding restrictions.

You can use the text below as a template to call and/or email your Representative. If you can please, both call and email your representative. You can find your representative [here](#).

Sincerely,

The National Council of Urban Indian Health

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Contact Congress!

Step 1: Copy the email below.

Step 2: Find your representative [here](#).

Step 3: Go to their website and click contact.

Step 4: Paste the email into the form and send. Please contact Meredith Raimondi (policy@ncuih.org) with questions.

Email to Your Representative!

Dear Representative [NAME],

As an urban Indian health advocate, I am writing to request your support in protecting Indian health system funding and ensuring that any funding restrictions or pauses explicitly exempt Tribal health programs and Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs) to prevent unintended disruptions in care, and to remain consistent with federal law and policy.

The Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA) established that “Federal health services to maintain and improve the health of the Indians are consonant with and required by the Federal Government’s historical and unique legal relationship with, and resulting responsibility to, the American Indian people.” Because these are legal obligations, programming that serves the interests of Tribes and Tribal citizens should not be included in any funding restriction or pause. This includes UIOs, which are health care Native-led nonprofit organizations that contract with the Indian Health Service to support the federal government’s legal obligation to provide health care services to Tribal citizens living in urban areas. In fact, the IHCIA directs the Secretary to “enter into contracts with, or make grants to, [UIOs] for the provision of health care and referral services for urban Indians resident in urban centers in which such organizations are situated.”

Any funding restrictions or pauses affecting the Indian health system would not only contradict these legal obligations but could also have devastating consequences, jeopardizing our ability to provide care to your constituents, meet payroll for providers and staff, and maintain essential services—ultimately putting the health and well-being of Tribal citizens at serious risk. For example, during the 2019 government shutdown, several UIOs had to reduce services or close their doors entirely, forcing them to leave their patients without adequate care. One UIO had multiple opioid overdoses in their community after they were forced to close their doors, several of which were fatal. Therefore, even a temporary halt in funding could immediately deprive people and communities of their life-saving services.

Your support is vital to ensuring that we continue to deliver essential healthcare services to our community uninterrupted. I look forward to your response on this critical issue.

Sincerely,
[NAME]

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NCUIH Contact: Meredith Raimondi, Vice President of Policy and Communications,
mraimondi@ncuih.org