NCUIH Sends Letter to HHS Requesting Exemption for IHS from Workforce Reduction Initiatives, Protection for IHS Funding

Category: Policy Blog
written by Alex Sampson | April 8, 2025

On March 12, 2025, the National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) sent a letter to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., urgently requesting his immediate intervention to safeguard the Indian Health Service (IHS) workforce and funding. The letter requested that Secretary Kennedy exempt IHS from all current and future workforce reduction initiatives and rescind hiring freezes, and protect IHS funding including shielding IHS from sequestration and impoundment.

Read the full letter here.

Background

The United States Senate confirmed Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. as the Secretary for HHS on February 13, 2025. During his confirmation and remarks at the February HHS Secretary Tribal Advisory Committee (STAC) meeting, Secretary Kennedy emphasized his support for Indian Country, including having a Native person at the Assistant Secretary level in HHS. NCUIH looks forward to working with Secretary Kennedy to improve the health of Indian Country. During the meeting, Secretary Kennedy offered protections to Tribal leaders and the Indian health system, stating, “When they announced $9.6 billion in cuts to my agency—10% of our workforce—the one sub-agency I insisted must be protected was IHS. We safeguarded 1,000 jobs at IHS, and we will continue to do so. As new orders and additional cuts come down, protecting these jobs remains my priority.”