

# [NCUIH March Policy Update: Congressional Testimony, Medicaid Guidance, and IHS Policy Developments](#)

Category: Policy Blog

written by NCUIH | March 23, 2026

## **In this Edition:**

- [NCUIH Testified Before Congress on Urban Indian Health](#)
- [HHS Secretary Kennedy Jr. Announced \\$1 Billion for IHS Infrastructure](#)
- [NCUIH in Action: Recent Policy Engagement with IHS and HHS leaders](#)
- [Medicaid Redetermination Guidance Included an AI/AN Exemption](#)
- [Bipartisan Bill Would Elevate Indian Health Service Leadership Within HHS](#)
- [IHS Requested Feedback on Health IT Modernization PATH Activities](#)
- [NCUIH Requested Input on Rural Health Transformation Fund Awards](#)
- [Upcoming Policy Events, Deadlines, and Opportunities](#)
- [Join Us in April for the 2026 NCUIH Annual Conference](#)

## **NCUIH Testifies Before Congress on Urban Indian Health**



**On March 17, 2026**, NCUIH CEO Francys Crevier, testified before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies during the American Indian and Alaska Native Public Witness hearing. Testifying on behalf of the National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) and the 41 Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs) it represents, she elevated the role of UIOs in the Indian health system and urged Congress to protect funding for the Indian Health Service, provide \$106 million for Urban Indian Health in FY27, maintain advance appropriations, and include UIOs in the Behavioral Health Pilot Program.

Her testimony underscored that Urban Indian Organizations remain an essential part of the Indian health system and continue to meet growing need in Native communities across the country. As stated in her testimony, “The three requests before you today are targeted and achievable: fund Urban Indian Health at \$106 million, maintain advance appropriations, and include UIOs in the Behavioral Health Pilot Program.”

She also emphasized that these requests are grounded in the federal government’s trust responsibility to provide health care for American Indian and Alaska Native people, including those living in urban areas. Her testimony reinforced that sustained investment in urban Indian health is necessary to protect services, strengthen care delivery, and ensure Native communities are not left behind.

NCUIH also [submitted written testimony](#).

Read more about the hearing on NCUIH’s [blog](#).

*“We need to make [Indian Health Service] mandatory funding. Indian Health Service is the only health care program that isn’t mandatory funding”*

**Mike Simpson**

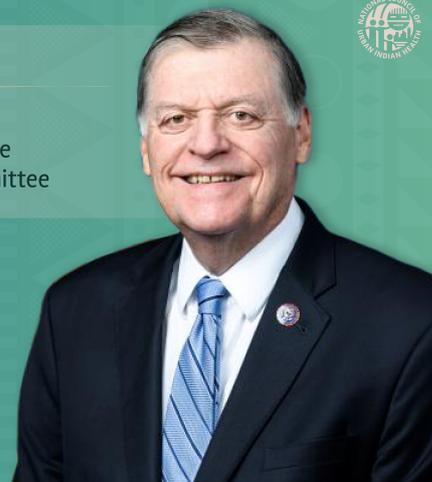
(R-ID-02)  
Chairman of the House  
Appropriations Subcommittee  
on Interior, Environment, and  
Related Agencies



*"This committee will not be eliminating advance funding. It's just not going to happen. It's a bipartisan committment."*

**Tom Cole**

(R-OK-04)  
Chairman of the House  
Appropriations Committee



**Interior Subcommittee Chairman Mike Simpson (ID-02-R) and Appropriations Committee Chairman Tom Cole (OK-04-R)** both reaffirmed the committee’s commitment to advancing progress in Indian health care and protecting and maintaining stable funding for IHS.

## **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Kennedy Jr. Announces \$1 Billion in Infrastructure Investment for IHS**

**HHS Secretary Kennedy Jr. announced a \$1 billion investment** toward priority Indian Health Service facilities infrastructure projects beginning in FY 2027.

- Funding is from existing departmental resources drawn from the HHS Nonrecurring Expenses Fund.
- Announcement was made at the February 12 IHS Tribal Summit.

Read more on our [blog](#).

# NCUIH in Action: Recent Policy Engagement

NCUIH engaged in several recent convenings, including:

- IHS Tribal Self-Governance Advisory Committee (TSGAC) Meeting  
February 24-25, 2026 | Washington, D.C.  
Discussion included the recently announced \$1 billion IHS infrastructure initiative.
- Native American Coalition for Economic Prosperity (NACEP) Fourth Convening of the Government-to-Government Roundtable Series  
February 25, 2026 | Washington, D.C.  
Discussion also included the \$1 billion IHS infrastructure initiative.

## CMS Guidance to States on Implementation of One Big Beautiful Bill Act 6-Month Medicaid Redeterminations - includes AI/AN Exemption

### *Exemptions for American Indians and Alaska Natives and Treatment of Other Eligibility Groups*

The 6-month renewal requirement in section 1902(e)(14)(L) of the Act does not apply to the individuals listed below.

- Certain American Indians and Alaska Natives described in section 1902(xx)(9)(A)(ii)(II) of the Act<sup>8</sup> who are enrolled under the state plan in the Medicaid adult group described at section 1902(a)(10)(A)(i)(VIII) of the Act (these individuals are exempted under section 1902(e)(14)(L)(ii) of the Act);
- Certain American Indians and Alaska Natives described in section 1902(xx)(9)(A)(ii)(II) of the Act<sup>9</sup> who are described in section 1902(a)(10)(A)(i)(VIII) of the Act and who are enrolled in coverage “under a waiver” of the state plan that provides coverage equivalent to MEC to all individuals described at section 1902(a)(10)(A)(i)(VIII) of the Act (these individuals are also exempted under section 1902(e)(14)(L)(ii) of the Act);

<sup>8</sup> American Indians and Alaska Natives exempt from the 6-month renewal requirement are: an Indian or **Urban Indian** (as such terms are defined in paragraphs (13) and (28) of section 4 of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act); a California Indian described in section 809(a) of such Act; or those who have otherwise been determined eligible as an Indian for the Indian Health Service under regulations promulgated by the Secretary.

<sup>9</sup> See Footnote 8.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) issued guidance to states on implementation of 6-month Medicaid redeterminations, and the **guidance included an American Indian and Alaska Native exemption that also applies to Urban Indians.**

## NCUIH-Endorsed Bipartisan Bill to Elevate Indian Health Service Leadership Within

# HHS Introduced in Senate



The [Stronger Engagement for Indian Health Needs Act](#) is a bipartisan bill supported by NCUIH that would elevate the IHS Director to Assistant Secretary for Indian Health within HHS.

Why it matters:

- This would strengthen Tribal representation in federal health decision-making and reinforce the federal government's trust responsibility to provide health care to American Indian and Alaska Native people.

Legislative updates include:

- **Senate bill** introduced February 5, 2026 by Senators Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV) and Mike Rounds (R-SD)
- **House bill** introduced January 28, 2026 by Representatives Greg Stanton (D-AZ-04) and David Joyce (R-OH-14)

Read more on our [blog](#).

## NCUIH Provided Comments to IHS on Proposed Realignment following Second Round of Urban Confer

Following IHS' January 15 virtual Urban Confer session on the IHS Strategic Realignment, NCUIH submitted written comments to IHS emphasizing the importance of protecting UIO contracts, maintaining Area offices and strengthening partnerships, addressing IHS staffing needs, and ensuring continued engagement with UIOs, while also highlighting the importance of 100% Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) for UIOs.

IHS' Realignment plans (communicated during the January 15 Urban Confer):

- April 1: Federal Register Comment Period (30 days)
- May 22: Federal Register Notice
- May-June: Transition to Future State

## **IHS Requested Feedback on Health IT Modernization PATH Activities**

On March 5, IHS held a **Health IT Modernization Information Session** on Patients at the Heart (PATH) electronic health record (EHR) activities. Planned go-live for the pilot site for implementing PATH EHR is the beginning of August 2026.

During the session, IHS shared consultation and confer questions for Tribes and UIOs, including:

- What clarifications are needed regarding the PATH EHR activities?
- What additional information or content would help sites better understand PATH EHR implementation?
- What additional information or content would be helpful to better understand PATH EHR implementation at your site?
  - What potential opportunities do you foresee for staff or patients in implementing PATH EHR?

**Written comments are due by Saturday, April 4, 2026**, to [urbanconfer@ihs.gov](mailto:urbanconfer@ihs.gov) with the subject line: Health IT Modernization CY 03-5-2026.

## **NCUIH is Requesting UIO Input on Rural Health Transformation Fund Awards**

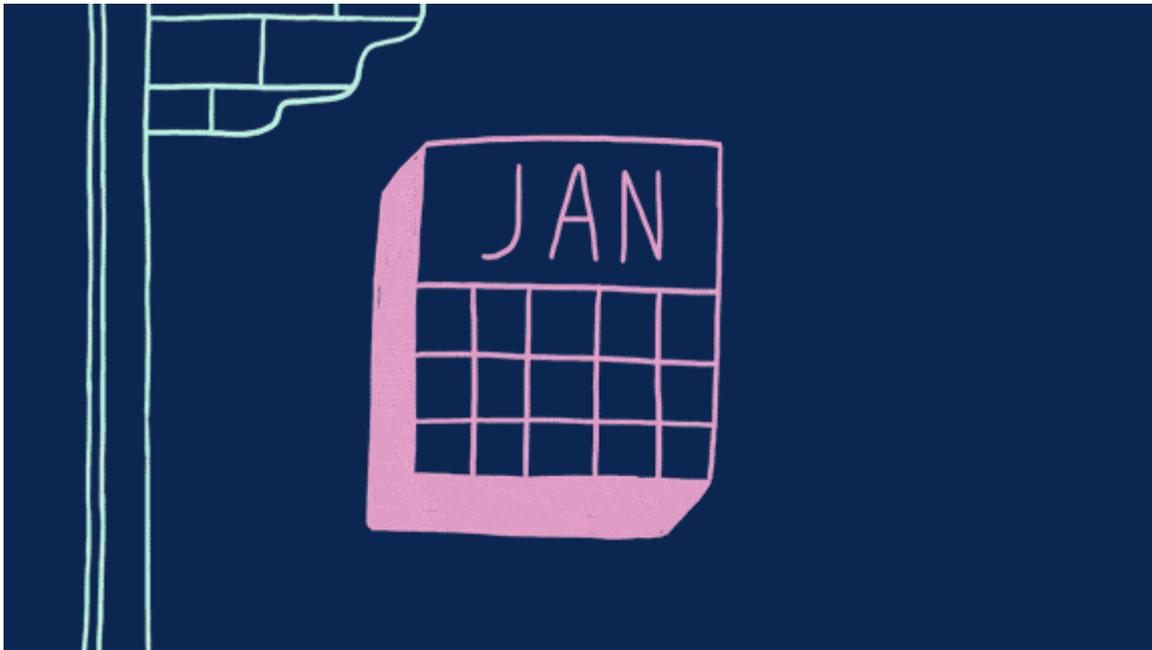
On December 29, 2025, The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) awarded all 50 states funding through the Rural Health Transformation Fund (RHTF). Read more about this funding on NCUIH's [blog](#).

NCUIH is asking Urban Indian Organizations to share whether they receive this funding.

### **Request for UIOs:**

- Let NCUIH know if your UIO receives RHTF funding. Contact: [policy@ncuih.org](mailto:policy@ncuih.org)

## **Upcoming Events and Key Dates Requests for Information**



- **March 25-26, 2026** — CMS Tribal Technical Advisory Group Quarterly Meeting (Washington, D.C.)
- **April 4, 2026** — Written comments due for IHS Health IT Modernization PATH activities
- **April 6-9, 2026** — Tribal Self-Governance Conference (Phoenix, Arizona). Register [here](#).
- **April 15, 2026** — NCUIH Monthly Policy Workgroup (Virtual)
- **April 27-30, 2026**— 2026 NCUIH Annual Conference (Washington, D.C.)

## 2026 NCUIH Annual Conference



Join us April 27–30, 2026, in Washington, D.C., as NCUIH marks the 50th anniversary of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA)—a landmark commitment to the health and well-being of American Indians and Alaska Natives—and reflects on five decades of progress, collaboration, and continued commitment to Native health.

Register to attend: <https://ncuih.org/conference/>

# Recent NCUIH Policy Blogs

1. [1. Serving Native Community Across New York City: The Work of the New York Indian Council](#)  
March 3, 2026/in [Policy Blog](#)/by [River Carroll](#)
2. [HHS Secretary Kennedy Jr. Announces \\$1 Billion in Infrastructure Investment for IHS](#)  
March 4, 2026/in [Policy Blog](#)/by [Jeremy Grabiner](#)
3. [NCUIH Submits Written Testimony Urging House to Protect Funding of Indian Health Service and Urban Indian Health](#)  
March 13, 2026/in [Policy Blog](#)/by [Jeremy Grabiner](#)
4. [NCUIH Testifies Before Congress on Native Health Priorities](#)  
March 17, 2026/in [Policy Blog](#)/by [NCUIH](#)

## About NCUIH

The National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) is a national representative for the 41 Urban Indian Organizations contracting with the Indian Health Service under the *Indian Health Care Improvement Act*. NCUIH is devoted to the support and development of high quality and accessible health and public health services for American Indian and Alaska Native people living in urban areas.

NCUIH respects and supports Tribal sovereignty and the unique government-to-government relationship between our Tribal Nations and the United States. NCUIH works to support those federal laws, policies, and procedures that respect and uplift Tribal sovereignty and the government-to-government relationship. NCUIH does not support any federal law, policy, or procedure that infringes upon or in any way diminishes Tribal sovereignty or the government-to-government relationship.