NCUIH Honors HHS Senior Advisor Mark Cruz with Excellence in Public Service Award

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written by Meredith Raimondi | May 6, 2026

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D.C. (April 29, 2026) – The National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) presented the Excellence in Public Service to Advance Native Health Award to Mark Cruz, Senior Advisor to the Secretary at the Department of Health and Human Services, during NCUIH's 2026 Annual Conference.

Mark Cruz, Senior Advisor to the Secretary, HHS and and Walter Murillo, CEO of NATIVE HEALTH, and NCUIH Vice-President

> **"My commitment to you all is to always engage, to always show up."**
>
> — Mark Cruz, Senior Advisor to the Secretary, HHS, April 28, 2026

The Excellence in Public Service to Advance Native Health Award recognizes a federal public servant whose work has meaningfully advanced health care access for Native people, including those living in urban areas. Mark Cruz was appointed in June 2025 as the first-ever Senior Advisor to the HHS Secretary, a position created to ensure Native health priorities are represented at the highest levels of the Department. Since taking office, Mark has delivered — proposing advanced appropriations for IHS in the President's FY 2027 budget request and helping drive Secretary

Kennedy's $1 billion commitment to IHS construction. He has also logged thousands of miles visiting Urban Indian Organizations across the country — a reflection of his belief that showing up is part of the job. NCUIH is grateful for his partnership and dedication to advancing Native health.

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.

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