Senators Murkowski and Schatz Introduce Native Children's Commission Implementation Act, Key Inclusions for Urban Indian Organizations Across Health, Research, and Data Initiatives

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On July 14, 2026, U.S. Senators Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Brian Schatz (D-HI) introduced the *Native Children's Commission Implementation Act*, comprehensive legislation to improve health, housing, nutrition, workforce, and justice outcomes for Native children, youth, and families. The bill spans nine titles covering health, research and data, environmental health, nutrition, homelessness, workforce, and justice for Native children and families.

Key Highlights for Urban Indian Organizations

Title IV of the bill, which focuses on the physical and behavioral health of Native children, contains key inclusions of UIOs in bill:

- **Tribal Perinatal Workforce Demonstration Grants (Sec. 403):**The section establishes a grant program for eligible entities to recruit, train, and retain maternity care providers, behavioral health providers, dietitians, doulas, and other perinatal health workers. **Urban Indian organizations are named as eligible entities for the program.**
- **HRSA Tribal Advisory Committee (Sec. 401):**This new committee, composed of at least 12 members, would be appointed from nominations submitted by Indian Tribes, Tribal organizations, **and urban Indian organizations.**
- **SAMHSA Tribal Technical Advisory Committee (Sec. 404):**Of at least 14 members, two seats are reserved for representatives of "national Tribal organizations or urban Indian organizations" with national expertise in behavioral health.

Title III (Research and Data) also includes meaningful UIO inclusion:

- **NIH Tribal Health Research Office and Tribal Advisory Committee (Sec. 301):**The bill establishes a new Tribal Health Research Office within the Office of the Director of NIH, along with a Tribal Advisory Committee of at least 17 members. Notably, **two of those seats are specifically reserved for representatives of urban Indian organizations.**
- **Native Infant and Maternal Health Data (Sec. 302):**The bill directs CDC to enter into cooperative agreements with Indian Tribes, Tribal organizations, Tribal Epidemiology Centers, Papa Ola Lokahi, **and urban Indian organizations** to address misclassification and under sampling of Native infant and maternal health data.

What Else Is in the Bill

Beyond health, the *Native Children's Commission Implementation Act* touches several other areas important to Indian Country:

- **Title VII (Homelessness)**would create new Tribal and Native Hawaiian homeless housing assistance grant programs and a Tribal Continuum of Care Participation Grant Program — though eligibility is currently limited to Indian Tribes and tribally designated housing entities.
- **Title IX (Workforce)**strengthens the 477 Initiative to give Tribes more flexibility to integrate federal workforce and self-sufficiency funding streams and creates a new Early Childhood Native American Advisory Committee with a dedicated seat for "a national urban Indian organization."
- **Title VI (Nutrition)**establishes new Tribal pilot programs for SNAP and child nutrition program administration.
- **Title V (Environmental Health)**creates a new Native Children's Environmental Health Protection Task Force at the Council on Environmental Quality.
- **Title II (Justice)**creates an Advisory Committee on Tribal Juvenile Justice with a dedicated urban Indian organization seat, along with a new Alaska Native Victim Services Fund and expanded Tribal domestic violence resources.

Background

This bill grows directly out of the work of the **Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children**.

The Commission was founded by the *Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children Act*, which was introduced by Senators Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND) and signed into law in 2016. The 11-member Commission was charged with conducting a comprehensive study of federal, Tribal, state, and local programs, grants, and supports available to American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children and youth from birth through age 24, and with recommending how that system could be strengthened, improved, and, where needed, transformed. The Commission held regional hearings, virtual hearings, and listening sessions around the country, taking testimony directly from Tribal leaders, youth, elders, service providers, and scholars.

In February 2024, the Commission transmitted its final report, *The Way Forward: Report of the Alyce Spotted Bear & Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children,* to the President and Congress. The report laid out a roadmap of recommendations spanning child welfare, physical and behavioral health, education, juvenile justice, early childhood development, nutrition, and data sovereignty. The report's recommendations created the foundation for the *Native Children's Commission Implementation Act*.

Next Steps

The bill has been referred to the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. NCUIH will continue to monitor the bill's progress.