

**Ranking Member Grijalva's Statement**

- I want to first thank the Chair for including three democratic bills, including one of my own, on today's hearing agenda.
- And let me welcome Ms. Francys Crevier with the National Council of Urban Indian Health and express my gratitude for her taking the time to be here with us.
- My bill, H.R. 630, the Urban Indian Health Confer Act, would require the entire Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to confer with urban Indian organizations (UIOs) on the development and implementation of policies impacting urban Indian healthcare.
- During the Termination Era and in efforts to assimilate American Indians into the Western population, the federal government passed the Indian Relocation Act of 1956 to relocate American Indians from reservations to urban areas with promises of housing and employment assistance. However, this was an unfilled promise leaving many American Indians left in cities with a lack of housing and healthcare and removed from their culture.
- Prior to the BIA Relocation Program, only 8 percent of American Indians were living in cities. Today, over 70 percent of American Indians and Alaska Natives live within urban areas.
- Following the Termination Era, Congress established urban Indian organizations to fulfill the much-needed role of providing healthcare services to the large population of urban Indians living and seeking healthcare outside of tribal jurisdictions.
- Currently, only the Indian Health Service (IHS) has a legal obligation to confer with urban Indian organizations.
- The Department of Health and Human Services' lack of confer policy with urban Indian organizations has served as a barrier for urban Indians in accessing health care.
- This was highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic when urban Indian organizations were provided no notice regarding vaccine distribution until the deadline. This led to delays in urban Indian organizations' ability to timely distribute vaccines to urban Indian populations.
- My legislation would establish an urban Indian confer policy at the Department of Health and Human Services to ensure conference with urban Indian organizations for significant policy and initiative changes impacting urban Indians' health care.

- I am proud to sponsor this legislation, it is critical that urban Indian organizations are conferencing with the Department of Health and Human Services to ensure urban Indians are receiving the healthcare they deserve.
- I appreciate all the witnesses for joining us today and look forward to hearing their testimony and the consideration of this legislation.
- I yield back.