

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 29, 2022

The Honorable Chellie Pingree
Chairwoman
House Appropriations IE&R
2162 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Joyce
Ranking Member
House Appropriations IE&R
2065 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: FY23 Funding to Establish Indian Health Service Headache Disorders Centers of Excellence

Dear Chairwoman Pingree and Ranking Member Joyce:

As you finalize the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Fiscal Year 2023 Appropriations bill, we respectfully request the Subcommittee recognize the urgent needs of American Indian and Alaskan Native (AI/AN) communities and their lack of access to specialty care for disabling headache disorders. **Specifically, we request the Subcommittee include \$7 million to establish Indian Health Service (IHS) Headache Disorders Centers of Excellence (HCoE) and the inclusion of related report language.**

Headache disorders are far reaching – Migraine is the 2nd leading cause of global disability, and the leading cause of disability among women under the age of 55.¹ In the United States (US), AI/AN communities have the highest prevalence of disabling headache disorders – with 22.1% of Americans under IHS care living with migraine or severe headaches, compared to 15.9% of the total US population.² Furthermore, the incidence of concussion and mild traumatic brain injury³, and the mortality rate from accidents,⁴ are twice as high among AI/AN communities than the US average.

Even with these elevated rates, patient access to migraine and headache specialty care is extremely limited within the IHS. There is currently just one Neurologist per 125,000 people receiving IHS care in the Phoenix/Navajo Service Areas⁵. This is nearly five times less access to neurological care than the US population overall.⁶ There are also currently no physicians within IHS that have certification in the specialty field of Headache Medicine.

To provide access to specialized care for all patients in the IHS community who live with disabling migraine and headache disorders, we request the Subcommittee include \$7 million in funding to establish 6 IHS HCoE national system sites to span federal, tribal, rural, and urban Indian organization services across the twelve IHS Service Areas. Centers of Excellence have already been successfully established within the IHS for other health mandates including Centers of Excellence for Telebehavioral Health and Tribal Epidemiology Centers – Headache Centers of Excellence would prove no different. This specific program would be modeled after the successful HCoE program within the Veterans Health Administration that was established with appropriations in FY2018.

¹ <http://ihmeuw.org/5o4b>; <http://ihmeuw.org/5o4c>

² Burch R, et al. *Headache*. 2021;61:60-68.

³ Bazarian J, et al. *Brain Inj*. 2005;19:85-91.

⁴ Arias E, et al. *NVSR*. 2021;70:1.

⁵ https://www.ruralhealth.va.gov/docs/2014_VA-IHS_Report.pdf;

⁶ American Academy of Neurology 2021 Insights Report; <https://bit.ly/3pkSYra>

The IHS HCoE program would include direct care, telehealth, and consultation patient services, as well as education, training, and research. IHS HCoEs should benefit from the coordination of research programs with the Tribal Health Research Office of the Office of the Director of NIH.⁷ Emphasis would be placed on training tribal and urban Indian organization HCoE health care providers, and on telehealth services to reach all communities. Selection of site locations for IHS HCoEs would be at the discretion of the Secretary of Health and Human Services – but made in close consultation with Tribal stakeholders to ensure equitable access to these services.

To ensure equitable access to specialized headache care for IHS recipients living with disabling headache disorders, we encourage the Subcommittee to include \$7 million in funding to establish six IHS HCoE national sites to span federal, tribal, rural, and urban Indian organization services across the twelve IHS Service Areas.

In addition, we respectfully request the inclusion of the below related Report Language:

Indian Health Services: Headache Disorders Centers of Excellence.—*The Committee recognizes that over 560,000 people under IHS care are living with migraine or severe headache disorders and that American Indian and Alaskan Native (AI/AN) communities have the highest prevalence of both disabling headache disorders and concussion / mild traumatic brain injuries, among any racial or ethnic group in the US. The Committee is concerned that AI/AN patients with chronic migraine, post-traumatic headache, and other disabling headache disorders often do not receive necessary specialty care. There are currently zero IHS-affiliated physicians certified with training in the specialty field of Headache Medicine, and there is a greatly insufficient number of IHS Neurologists overall. Accordingly, the Committee recognizes the need for IHS Headache Centers of Excellence, and provides \$7,000,000 for the establishment of, and the first year of annual funding for, at least six (6) IHS HCoE national sites. The IHS HCoEs will provide direct care, telehealth, and consultation patient services, as well as education, training, and research. Locations of IHS HCoE sites will be determined at the discretion of the Secretary, in concert with Tribal stakeholders, to ensure that access to their services is equitably distributed to federal, tribal, rural, and urban Indian organization AI/AN communities across the twelve IHS Service Areas. Programmatic emphasis will be placed on the training of tribal and urban Indian organization HCoE health care providers, and on telehealth services to reach all communities. Amounts appropriated in this Act (including the amendments made by this Act) shall be used to supplement, not supplant, funding for the Indian Health Service.*

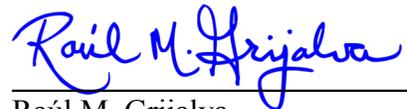
This language and funding will bring us closer in providing AI/AN communities with the health care they need and deserve. We greatly appreciate your attention and thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

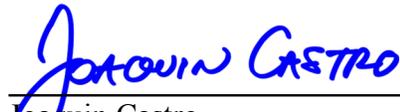
⁷ <https://dpcpsi.nih.gov/thro>



Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



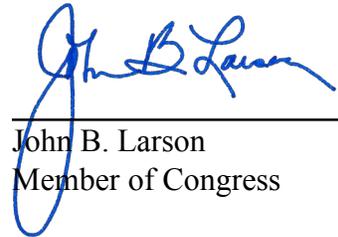
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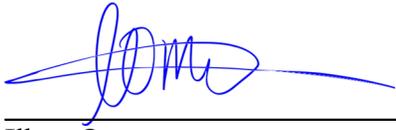
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