

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

October 30, 2023

The Honorable Roselyn Tso
Indian Health Service Headquarters
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Director Tso,

We write today in support of efforts to consider expanding the Purchased and Referred Care Delivery Area (PRCDA) to all counties in South Dakota and North Dakota. It is our understanding the Indian Health Service (IHS) is considering conducting a study to examine the feasibility of this potential residency expansion. We respectfully ask IHS to conduct this study in a timely manner and move to promptly analyze the results.

As you are aware, IHS beneficiaries must reside within the PRCDA to be eligible for the PRC program. According to the 2010 reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act, the entirety of South Dakota and North Dakota should fall under PRCDA status. It is our understanding IHS has opted not to implement statewide coverage in South Dakota and North Dakota on the basis such a change may impact services for those residing in PRCDA counties. With IHS service units in both states increasingly accessing funding from third-party collections, we believe this is an opportune time to seriously reexamine the possibility of expanding residency eligibility.

According to census data, thousands of citizens of tribal descent are residing in counties not covered under the PRCDA. In addition to residency requirements, these tribal beneficiaries must abide by a number of other rules when attempting to access PRC, including medical priority and notification requirements. With the Great Plains Area (GPA) being a stronghold for IHS direct care, tribal members in South Dakota and North Dakota have little opportunity to access healthcare away from the agency. This may be problematic when a tribal beneficiary is unable to access IHS direct care or a service unit does not have the resources to provide care in a timely manner.

We understand IHS has conducted similar studies in the past before moving to expand residency eligibility in other states. As your agency begins to work through this process, we encourage you to work closely with tribal leaders. With consideration given to the challenges outlined in this letter, we request you provide our offices with regular updates on the status of this study. Please do not hesitate to contact any of us if we can provide you with additional information.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,



JOHN THUNE
United States Senator



M. MICHAEL ROUNDS
United States Senator




JOHN HOEVEN
United States Senator



KEVIN CRAMER
United States Senator



KELLY ARMSTRONG
Member of Congress



DUSTY JOHNSON
Member of Congress