

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. _____

To amend the Indian Health Care Improvement Act to elevate the position of Director of the Indian Health Service within the Department of Health and Human Services to Assistant Secretary for Indian Health, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO (for herself and Mr. ROUNDS) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on

A BILL

To amend the Indian Health Care Improvement Act to elevate the position of Director of the Indian Health Service within the Department of Health and Human Services to Assistant Secretary for Indian Health, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Stronger Engagement
5 for Indian Health Needs Act of 2026”.

1 **SEC. 2. ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR INDIAN HEALTH.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 601 of the Indian Health
3 Care Improvement Act (25 U.S.C. 1661) is amended—

4 (1) in subsection (a)—

5 (A) in paragraph (2)—

6 (i) in the paragraph heading, by strik-
7 ing “DIRECTOR” and inserting “ASSIST-
8 ANT SECRETARY FOR INDIAN HEALTH”;

9 (ii) in the first sentence, by striking
10 “a Director” and inserting “an Assistant
11 Secretary for Indian Health (referred to in
12 this section as the ‘Assistant Secretary’)”;

13 (iii) in the second sentence, by strik-
14 ing “The Director shall report” and insert-
15 ing “The Assistant Secretary shall report
16 directly”;

17 (iv) in the third sentence, by striking
18 “the Director” and inserting “the Assist-
19 ant Secretary”; and

20 (v) in the fourth sentence, by striking
21 “A Director” and inserting “An Assistant
22 Secretary”;

23 (B) in paragraph (3), by striking “date of
24 enactment of the Indian Health Care Improve-
25 ment Reauthorization and Extension Act of
26 2009 shall serve as Director” and inserting

1 “date of enactment of the Stronger Engage-
2 ment for Indian Health Needs Act of 2026
3 shall serve as Assistant Secretary”;

4 (C) in paragraph (4), in the matter pre-
5 ceding subparagraph (A), by striking “Direc-
6 tor” and inserting “Assistant Secretary”; and

7 (D) by adding at the end the following:

8 “(5) DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY; OTHER
9 OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES.—The Assistant Sec-
10 retary, with the approval of the Secretary, may—

11 “(A) appoint a Deputy Assistant Sec-
12 retary; and

13 “(B) employ and prescribe the functions of
14 such officers and employees, including attor-
15 neys, as are necessary to administer the activi-
16 ties of the Service.”;

17 (2) in subsection (c)—

18 (A) in the matter preceding paragraph (1),
19 by striking “Director” and inserting “Assistant
20 Secretary”;

21 (B) in paragraph (1), by striking “date of
22 enactment of the Indian Health Care Improve-
23 ment Reauthorization and Extension Act of
24 2009” and inserting “date of enactment of the

1 Stronger Engagement for Indian Health Needs
2 Act of 2026”; and

3 (C) in paragraph (3)—

4 (i) in subparagraph (B), by inserting
5 “(commonly known as the ‘Snyder Act’)”
6 before “(25 U.S.C. 13)”; and

7 (ii) in subparagraph (E), by striking
8 “(25 U.S.C. 450 et seq.)” and inserting
9 “(25 U.S.C. 5301 et seq.)”;

10 (3) in subsection (d)(1), in the matter pre-
11 ceding subparagraph (A), by striking “Director” and
12 inserting “Assistant Secretary”; and

13 (4) by adding at the end the following:

14 “(e) SALARY.—The salary of the Assistant Secretary
15 shall be paid from amounts in the Indian Health Services
16 account of the Service.”.

17 (b) REFERENCES.—Any reference to the Director of
18 the Indian Health Service in any Federal law, Executive
19 order, rule, regulation, or delegation of authority, or in
20 any document of or relating to the Director of the Indian
21 Health Service, shall be deemed to be a reference to the
22 Assistant Secretary for Indian Health.

23 (c) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

24 (1) Section 603(b) of the Indian Health Care
25 Improvement Act (25 U.S.C. 1663(b)) is amended

1 by striking “Office of the Director” and inserting
2 “Office of the Assistant Secretary for Indian
3 Health”.

4 (2) Section 604(b) of the Indian Health Care
5 Improvement Act (25 U.S.C. 1663a(b)) is amended,
6 in each of paragraphs (2) and (3), by striking “Of-
7 fice of the Director” and inserting “Office of the As-
8 sistant Secretary for Indian Health”.

9 (d) RATE OF BASIC PAY.—

10 (1) POSITIONS AT LEVEL IV.—Section 5315 of
11 title 5, United States Code, is amended by striking
12 “Assistant Secretaries of Health and Human Serv-
13 ices (6)” and inserting “Assistant Secretaries of
14 Health and Human Services (7)”.

15 (2) POSITIONS AT LEVEL V.—Section 5316 of
16 title 5, United States Code, is amended by striking
17 “Director, Indian Health Service, Department of
18 Health and Human Services.”.