



November 30, 2022

The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

***Re: Indian Health Care Funding and Advance Appropriations***

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the undersigned Tribal nations, Tribal Organizations, and friends of Indian health, we write to respectfully request that you call upon Congress to ***include Advance Appropriations and no less than the House-passed level of \$8.121 billion*** for the Indian Health Service (IHS) in the final Appropriations bill for FY 2023.

We call upon the United States to honor its trust and treaty obligations to Tribal nations by securing these requests to improve the health care status of American Indians and Alaska Native people.<sup>1</sup> Tribal nations exchanged millions of acres of land for the agreements and promises in the treaties between our nations, including the obligation for the provision of comprehensive health care from the United States.

Accordingly, these federal responsibilities are carried out, in part, by the IHS, within the Department of Health and Human Services. This agency provides both direct care and resources for the delivery of health care services to American Indian and Alaska Native people.<sup>2</sup> The IHS and the Indian health care delivery system are unique in this regard.

American Indian and Alaska Native people often face the most significant health disparities among all populations in the United States. The rates of diabetes, suicides, behavioral health challenges, COVID-19 infections, hospitalizations, and deaths are higher than most other populations. Yet, the Indian health system is underfunded by nearly 50% of appropriate levels.

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<sup>1</sup> Congress declared the fulfillment of the trust responsibility and treaty obligations to achieve the highest health care levels for American Indians and Alaska Natives and to provide the requisite resources to be the policy of this Nation in the *Indian Health Care Improvement Act*. 25 U.S.C. §1602.

<sup>2</sup> Although the federal trust responsibility and treaty obligation extends throughout the federal government, the IHS is the primary agency which carries out these responsibilities. The IHS provides health care services either directly to American Indian and Alaska Native people, or through contracts or compacts with Tribal nations which, in turn, provide the services. The IHS may also enter contracts with urban Indian organizations to provide health care services to American Indian and Alaska Native people in certain urban locations.

Strategic investments from the COVID-19 relief funding packages such as the *American Rescue Plan Act*, have been welcomed. However, the underlying conditions which contributed to the tragic COVID-19 outcomes remain unaddressed. These conditions include, for example, the lack of adequate health care facilities, specialty care facilities, available workforce, and consistent and recurring funding for prevention and treatment services.

This chronic underfunding significantly limits the availability and accessibility of health care services for our communities. It also leaves the Indian health system particularly vulnerable to the instability of the federal funding process when Continuing Resolutions or government shutdowns occur.

Each day without full funding, with only temporary or no funding from the Continuing Resolutions or government shutdowns, is a step backward for Indian health care systems. Health care service delivery, administrative functions, and other operations are significantly impeded, delayed, or disrupted during periods of Continuing Resolutions or government shutdowns to the detriment of the American Indian and Alaska Native patients.

Congress can change that. The United States and Tribal nations share a government-to-government relationship and a mutual resolve to improve the health of our communities. Securing the House-passed levels of funding and Advance Appropriations will provide the initial step forward to funding stability for the Indian health care system.

We urge Congress to take this necessary step and stand ready to work with you in improving the lives of American Indian and Alaska Native people. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

### **Tribal Nations**

Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma  
Caddo Nation  
Chickasaw Nation  
Citizen Potawatomi Nation  
Cloverdale Rancheria of Pomo Indians of California  
Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation  
Cowlitz tribe  
Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa  
Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe  
Jamul Indian Village of California  
Keweenaw Bay Indian Community  
La Posta Band of Mission Indians  
Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians  
Nez Perce Tribe  
Oneida Nation  
Pechanga Band of Indians  
Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma  
Poarch Creek Indians

Pueblo of Tesuque  
Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe  
Rappahannock Tribe  
Resighini Rancheria  
Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe  
San Carlos Apache Tribe  
Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians  
Skokomish Tribe  
Sokaogon Chippewa Community  
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe  
The Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottwatomi Indians (Gun Lake Tribe)  
Tohono O'odham Nation  
Tsalagi Nvdaigi Tribe  
Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana  
Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe  
Walker River Paiute Tribe  
Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah)  
Ysleta del Sur Pueblo

### **Organizations**

ACA Consumer Advocacy  
AI/AN Health Partners  
Alaska Native Health Board  
Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium  
Albuquerque Area Indian Health Board, Inc.  
American Academy of Dermatology Association  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Indian Health & Services  
American Indian Health Commission for Washington State  
American Indian Health Service of Chicago  
Association on American Indian Affairs  
Bakersfield American Indian Health Project, Inc.  
Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation  
California Consortium for Urban Indian Health  
California Rural Indian Health Board  
Canoncito Band of Navajos Health Center  
Caring Ambassadors Program  
Choctaw Health Center  
Colorado Consumer Health Initiative  
Copper River Native Association  
Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments  
Every Texan  
Fallon Tribal Health Center  
Families USA  
Family Voices  
First Focus on Children

Fresno American Indian Health Project  
Great Lakes Area Tribal Health Board  
Health Care Voices  
Hepatitis C Mentor & Support Group, Inc.  
Hunter Health  
Indian Health Care Resource Center of Tulsa  
Indian Health Center of Santa Clara Valley  
Indigenous Pact  
Inter Tribal Association of Arizona  
International Association for Indigenous Aging  
International Association of Forensic Nurses  
Justice in Aging  
Kansas City Indian Center  
Kids Forward  
Maniilaq Association  
Metro New York Health Care for All  
Michigan League for Public Policy  
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners  
National Council of Urban Indian Health  
National Indian Health Board  
National Indigenous Women's Resource Center  
National League for Nursing  
National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition  
National Partnership for Women & Families  
Native American Connections  
Native American LifeLines, Inc.  
Native American Rehabilitation Association of the Northwest, Inc.  
Native Americans for Community Action, Inc.  
NATIVE Project - Urban Indian Health Program - Spokane, WA  
Nevada Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence  
Nisqually Tribal Health & Wellness Center  
Northwest Harvest  
Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board  
Oklahoma City Indian Clinic  
Oklahoma Policy Institute  
Partners In Health  
R2H Action [Right to Health]  
Riverside-San Bernardino County Indian Health, Inc.  
Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council  
San Francisco AIDS Foundation  
Sault Tribe Health Division  
Seattle Indian Health Board  
Self-Governance Communication & Education Tribal Consortium  
SF Hep B Free - Bay Area  
South Dakota Urban Indian Health  
Southcentral Foundation

Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium  
Southern Plains Tribal Health Board  
Texas Native Health  
Treatment Action Group  
Tuba City Regional Health Care Corporation  
United American Indian Involvement, Inc.  
United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund  
University of California San Francisco School of Medicine HEAL Initiative  
Urban Inter-Tribal Center of Texas - Urban Indian Health Program - Dallas, TX  
USAgings  
Wiconi Wakan Health and Healing Center  
Work for Consolidated Tribal Health Project

Cc: The Vice President  
The Honorable Xavier Becerra  
The Honorable Shalanda Young  
The Honorable Roselyn Tso