



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.¹ 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.² 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.

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

¹ 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.

² 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.



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

[Signatories]

Tribal Organizations

[Signatories]

Friends of Indian Health

[Signatories]

Cc: The Honorable Kamala Harris
The Honorable Shalanda Young
The Honorable Xavier Becerra
The Honorable Roselyn Tso