

# ***AI/AN Health Partners***

April 8, 2019

The Honorable Betty McCollum  
Chairwoman  
Interior Appropriations Subcommittee  
2007 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Joyce  
Ranking Member  
Interior Appropriations Subcommittee  
1124 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman McCollum and Ranking Member Joyce:

The AI/AN Health Partners is a coalition of health organizations dedicated to improving health care for American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs). AI/ANs face substantial health disparities, and higher mortality and morbidity rates than the general population. The Indian Health Service (IHS) is a critical aspect of how they can access health care. However, the IHS must have sufficient resources to meet its mission to raise the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of American Indians and Alaska Natives to the highest level.

The Partners recognize the budget constraints your committee faces, but we are also aware that for too many years federal funding for tribal health programs has fallen woefully short. A December 2018 GAO report found that the IHS per capita spending was \$4,078 as compared to \$8,109 for Medicaid, \$10,692 for veterans and \$13,185 for Medicare.

Being able to access health care when needed is key to erasing the disparity of care for AI/ANS. In a March 2016 GAO report, "Actions Needed to Improve Oversight of Patient Wait Times," IHS facility staff pointed to three things that were necessary to improve timely access to health care for American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs):

"...facility staff stated that a lack of sufficient primary care providers, as well as aging infrastructure and equipment are significant obstacles to ensuring that patients receive timely care."

To address these concerns, for FY 2020, the AI/AN Partners recommends that Congress:

- Increase the funding for loan repayment and scholarships by \$8-32,000,000,
- Increase funding for staff housing by \$30,000,000,
- Increase funding for modern medical equipment by \$10,000,000

Attached to this letter is our FY 2020 appropriations proposal that gives greater rationale for these funding requests.

Interior Subcommittee Chairwoman Betty McCollum  
Interior Subcommittee Ranking Member David Joyce  
Page two  
April 8, 2019

Thank you for considering our request. We look forward to working with you to improve health care for American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Sincerely,

American Academy of PAs  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry  
American Association of Colleges of Nursing  
American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine  
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy  
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
American Dental Association  
American Dental Education Association  
American Optometric Association  
American Physical Therapy Association  
Association of American Indian Physicians  
Association of American Medical Colleges  
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges  
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Inc. (COA)  
National Council for Behavioral Health  
National Kidney Foundation