

AI/AN Health Partners

April 12, 2019

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairwoman
Interior Appropriations Subcommittee
131 Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall
Ranking Member
Interior Appropriations Subcommittee
131 Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murkowski and Vice Chairman Udall:

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 Lisa Murkowski
Interior Subcommittee Ranking Member Tom Udall
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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