CALLING FOR THE EXEMPTION OF THE INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE
FROM THE PRESIDENTIAL MEMORANDUM IMPOSING A FEDERAL
HIRING FREEZE

WHEREAS, the National Indian Health Board (NIHB), established in 1972, serves all Federally
recognized American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) Tribal governments by advocating for the
improvement of health care delivery to AI/ANs, as well as upholding the Federal government’s trust
responsibility to AI/AN Tribal governments; and

WHEREAS, on January 22nd, 2017, the President Donald Trump signed a presidential
memorandum implementing a hiring freeze across the federal government excluding military and public
safety sectors; and

WHEREAS, the unmet health needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives are severe and
the health status of American Indians and Alaska Natives is far below that of the general population
of the United States, resulting in an average life expectancy for American Indians and Alaska Natives
4.2 years less than that for the U.S. all races population; and

WHEREAS, the Indian Health Service is the “…principal federal healthcare provider and
health advocate for Indian people…” and is tasked with providing comprehensive health service for
approximately 2.2 million American Indians and Alaska Native belonging to 567 federally
recognized Tribes; and

WHEREAS, the Indian Health Service has over 1,550 vacancies for medical professionals
across the system which is causing major gaps in healthcare funding; and

WHEREAS, vacancies in key leadership positions at the Indian Health Service makes
improving quality of care at the agency nearly impossible; and

WHEREAS, in October 2016, the Department of Health and Human Services Office of the
Inspector General reported that there is a 33% vacancy rate for physicians in IHS hospitals; and

WHEREAS, the same Inspector General found that “Vacancies, use of “acting” positions,
and dependence on contracted providers sometimes impair hospital service stability and continuity
of care; and

WHEREAS, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services have found that inadequate
staffing is closely linked with violations of the Emergency Medical Treatment & Labor Act
(EMTALA) at IHS hospitals; and
WHEREAS, a federal hiring freeze poses immediate concerns for the continued delivery of quality health care to 2.2 million American Indians and Alaska Natives; and

WHEREAS, a federal hiring freeze could lead to more expensive contracting to compensate for those Indian Health Service vacancies for the delivery of health care; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that NIHB, as the advocate for health of all 567 federally-recognized Tribes, supports a permanent exemption for the Indian Health Service from this and all future presidential memoranda and executive actions imposing a federal hiring freeze; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that NIHB requests the Trump Administration to include an exemption for the Indian Health Service for this and future presidential memoranda and executive orders imposing a federal hiring freeze.

CERTIFICATION
The foregoing resolution was adopted by the Board, with quorum present, on the 25th day of January 2017.

Vinton Hawley
Chairperson

ATTEST:

Lisa Elgin
Recording Secretary