

National Indian Health Board



National Indian Health Board Resolution 17-02

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