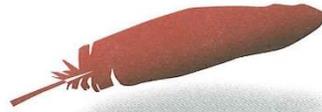


# National Indian Health Board



## National Indian Health Board Resolution 20 - 06

### Support for Addressing Housing and Homelessness in Indian Country as a Public Health Priority

**WHEREAS**, the National Indian Health Board (NIHB), established in 1972, serving 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, does hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

**WHEREAS**, the federal government has assumed trust obligations to AI/AN Tribes and Peoples in perpetuity for health care, housing, education, public safety, land management, and other services established through over 300 Treaties signed between sovereign Tribal Nations and the United States that are further enshrined in the U.S. Constitution, Supreme Court case law, federal legislation and regulations, and presidential executive orders; and

**WHEREAS**, the federal government's trust responsibility for health extends to every federal agency and department, not just the Indian Health Service (IHS); and

**WHEREAS**, housing is a social determinant of health, and all Tribal communities should have access to housing that is decent, safe, sanitary, and affordable, and

**WHEREAS**, homelessness, unstable housing, and overcrowded housing in Indian Country are strong determinants of health outcomes, whereby Tribal housing issues and challenges exacerbate the health disparities and lower health status experienced by AI/ANs; and

**WHEREAS**, studies demonstrate that homelessness and substandard housing are risk factors for domestic violence, human trafficking and Missing and Murdered Indigenous women and girls, substance abuse, mental illness, and other health problems in Indian Country; and

**WHEREAS**, AI/AN communities are disproportionately impacted by housing issues with roughly 23 percent of existing homes in Tribal areas in need of repairs, upgrades, and reconstruction compared to 5 percent of all U.S. households; and

**WHEREAS**, there are estimated to be up to 85,000 homeless AI/ANs living in Tribal areas, contributing to significantly higher rates of overcrowded housing on Tribal reservations and lands, with 16 percent of AI/ANs experiencing overcrowded housing compared to 2 percent of all households nationwide; and

**WHEREAS**, housing and homelessness issues are exacerbated by the fact that AI/AN communities face the highest rates of poverty of any demographic at 26.2 percent compared to 14 percent nationwide, with median household income levels 32 percent below the national average; and

**WHEREAS**, the Department of Housing and Urban Development acknowledged in their Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 President's Budget that "*the lack of housing and infrastructure in Indian Country is severe and widespread, and far exceeds the funding currently provided to tribes*" and that housing shortages adversely impact issues of domestic violence, substance abuse, and poor educational outcomes in Indian Country; and

**WHEREAS**, Congress has not reauthorized the Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act since 2013, and has chronically underfunded housing maintenance, upgrades, and construction across Indian Country; and

**WHEREAS**, housing shortages in Indian Country worsen existing behavioral health disparities among AI/ANs, where suicide is already the second leading cause of death among AI/AN youth between the ages of 5 and 24 and AI/AN youth substance abuse rates are already nearly double the national average for youth; and

**WHEREAS**, substandard housing and housing shortages in Tribal communities contribute to the ongoing and pervasive health provider shortages experienced across the Indian health system; and

**WHEREAS**, the persistent practice of some federal agencies in providing funding opportunities to the States or other governmental entities, and excluding Tribal governments and organizations from funding, creates barriers to AI/AN obtaining decent, safe, sanitary and affordable housing; and

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the National Indian Health Board (NIHB) strongly supports addressing the housing crisis in Indian Country as a public health priority given its outsized negative impact on health outcomes and status among AI/ANs and calls upon Congress and the Administration to remove barriers to funding, and provide specific Tribal funding set-asides for Tribal governments, and Tribal organizations, in all funding offered, as a part of the Trust Responsibility; and

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NIHB calls upon Congress and the Administration to provide direct, recurring, and sustainable funding to Tribes and Tribal organizations to end the housing crisis in Indian Country; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that this resolution shall be the policy of NIHB until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

### **CERTIFICATION**

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the Board, with quorum present, on the 26th day of February, 2020.

*Victoria Kitcheyan*

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**Chairperson, Victoria Kitcheyan**

**ATTEST:**

*Lisa Elgin*

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**Secretary, Lisa Elgin**