

National Indian Health Board



For Immediate Release

March 11, 2020

National Indian Health Board Postpones Tribal Public Health Summit Due to COVID-19 Concerns

Due to growing concerns around the spread of the COVID-19 virus, the Board of Directors and CEO of the National Indian Health Board (NIHB) announce that the 2020 National Tribal Public Health Summit, currently scheduled to take place March 17-20, 2020 in Omaha, Nebraska, is being postponed to a later time during 2020. At the heart of NIHB's work is our commitment to improving the health care and public health systems of all federally recognized Tribes. This sacred charge guides our decisions, including the decision to postpone the Tribal Public Health Summit to a date (to be determined) later this year.

NIHB, as a Tribal health organization, believes that we have a commitment to safeguard the health of all Tribal members, and that postponing the Summit to a date later in the year, could help to keep our Peoples healthy. This decision also recognizes that Tribal public health staff and Tribal leaders are committed to being available within their own communities where they may be needed to address this outbreak locally.

In addition, Tribal communities are the most vulnerable and least resourced to address a public health outbreak such as the COVID-19 virus. Tribal communities are disproportionately impacted by health conditions that increase the risk of a more serious COVID-19-related illness. According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance, these conditions include (but are not limited to) heart disease, diabetes, and respiratory illnesses. Among our Peoples who are 8 years of age and over, rates of coronary heart disease are 1.5 times the rate for Whites, while rates of diabetes among our Peoples are nearly three times the general population. Studies have shown that American Indians and Alaska Natives are also at increased

risk of lower respiratory tract infections, and in certain regions of the country are twice as likely as the general population to become infected and hospitalized with pneumonia, bronchitis, and influenza. These vulnerability factors were key in informing our decision to postpone the NIHB National Tribal Public Health Summit.

We are sorry for any inconvenience this change may cause and we humbly ask you for your forbearance. We also sincerely hope that you will plan on joining NIHB at the Public Health Summit, later this year. In the next hours and days, NIHB will be working to reach out to our attendees, presenters, sponsors, exhibitors and partners. Your support has been invaluable and we are grateful. We hope you will continue to stand with NIHB and Indian Country during this time.

In addition to this outreach, NIHB also will refocus its work on ensuring Tribal Communities and citizens are informed about COVID-19 and its impacts in Indian Country. We also will continue our advocacy efforts to bring resources to address COVID-19 in Tribal Communities, respecting Tribal sovereignty.

NIHB will be sending out more updates regarding the National Tribal Public Health Summit, including what to expect if you are currently registered as an attendee, exhibitor, vendor, or are a sponsor. For up to date information on the Summit and COVID-19, please see NIHB's website, www.nihb.org

Yours in Health and Unity,

NIHB Board of Directors and CEO