

# National Indian Health Board



## National Indian Health Board Resolution 16-03

### **Supporting the Indian Health Service and Department of Veterans Affairs Memorandum of Understanding and Objection to the Consolidation of the Indian Health Service and Tribal Reimbursement Program into one standard Program**

**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**, 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**, American Indians and Alaska Natives have the highest level of participation in the armed forces compared to any other population; and

**WHEREAS**, American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans are also more likely to lack health insurance and to have a disability, service-connected or otherwise, than Veterans of other races; and

**WHEREAS**, American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans are eligible for healthcare services from both the Indian Health Service and the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

**WHEREAS**, The Indian Health Service and the Department of Veterans Affairs have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding to establish coordination, collaboration, and resource-sharing between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Indian Health Service to improve the health status of American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans; and

**WHEREAS**, the goal of the Memorandum of Understanding is to foster an environment that brings together the strengths and expertise of each organization to actively improve the care and services provided by both; and

**WHEREAS**, it is the intent of the Memorandum of Understanding to facilitate collaboration between the Indian Health Service and the Department of Veterans Affairs, and not limit initiatives, projects, or interactions between the agencies in any way; and

**WHEREAS**, Section 405(c) of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act, as amended and enacted by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), requires the VA to reimburse

the Indian Health Service, an Indian Tribe, or a Tribal organization for services provided to beneficiaries eligible for services from either Department; and

**WHEREAS**, the agreements that have been implemented between the Indian Health Service and Tribal health care facilities and the VA have proven beneficial; and

**WHEREAS**, American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans have been able to receive quality health care services at local IHS and Tribal health care facilities, which are often much more accessible and conveniently located than the nearest the Department of Veterans Affairs facilities; and

**WHEREAS**, the Department of Veterans Affairs recently initiated Tribal consultation on consolidating its health care programs, including its Indian Health Service and Tribal Health Program Reimbursement Agreement Program, into one standard program, using a standard reimbursement rate; and

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that consolidating the Indian Health Service and Tribal Health Program Reimbursement Program, into one standard program would cause unnecessary pre-approvals, obstruct the continuity of care for American Indians and Alaska Veterans and infringe on IHS and Tribal authority under the Indian Health Care Improvement Act.; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that NIHB recommends that the Department of Veterans Affairs not consider altering the Memorandum of Understanding with the Indian Health Service and consolidating its Indian Health Service and Tribal Health Program Reimbursement Program, into one standard program because to do so infringes on Tribal sovereignty and the United States' Trust responsibility to provide health care to all American Indians and Alaska Natives.

#### **CERTIFICATION**

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the Board, with quorum present, on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of September 2016.



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Lester Secatero,  
Chairperson

**ATTEST:**



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Lisa Elgin,  
Recording Secretary