

# National Indian Health Board



## **National Indian Health Board Resolution 16-07**

### **A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF H.R. 2759 MENTAL HEALTH ACCESS IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2015**

**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**, devastating impacts from historical trauma, poverty, and a lack of adequate treatment resources continue to plague Tribal communities. Suicide rates are nearly 50 percent higher for AI/ANs compared to non-Hispanic whites; and

**WHEREAS**, H.R. 2759, Mental Health Improvement Act of 2015 would amend Title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for the coverage of marriage and family therapist services and mental health counselor services under Part B of the Medicare program; amends Medicare Part E to exclude such services from the skilled nursing facility prospective payment system; and Authorizes marriage and family therapists and mental health counselors to develop discharge plans for post-hospital services; and

**WHEREAS**, H.R. 2759, Mental Health Improvement Act of 2015 seeks to increase access and improve quality of care by enabling Licensed Professional Counselors and Licensed Marriage Family Therapists to provide patient care services as consistent with their education, training, competencies and clinical license. Enabling these provides to practice and be reimbursed for services within the scope of their education, training, competencies, and participate fully as an integral part of the patient's health care team will improve health outcomes and greatly benefit our patient populations; and

**WHEREAS**, H.R. 2759, Mental Health Improvement Act of 2015 promotes increased access to care for underserved beneficiaries in Medically Underserved Areas, Medically Underserved Populations, and Health Professional Shortage Areas, as designated by the Health Resources and Services Administration. AS the shortage of primate care physicians increases, so too will the challenges that patients in underserved communities face, especially those related to access. This legislation can help address providers shortages and access issues in underserved areas; and

**WHEREAS**, H.R. 2759, Mental Health Improvement Act of 2015 promotes cost-effective health care by increasing access to care and opportunities for early intervention at cost-effective settings as to minimize long-term health care costs such as those associated with preventable higher-cost conditions.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that NIHB supports the passage of H.R. 2759, Mental Health Improvement Act of 201 to provide for the coverage of Licensed Professional Counselors and Licensed Marriage Family Therapists under Part B of the Medicare program, and for other purposes; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, this resolution hereby affirms our support of the passage of H.R. 2759, Mental Health Improvement Act of 2015.

**CERTIFICATION**

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the Board, with quorum present, on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of August 2016.



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Chairperson

**ATTEST:**



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Recording Secretary