



2018 Mid-Year Convention Toppenish, Washington

RESOLUTION #18 - 28

“A CALL TO CONGRESS TO SUPPORT AN INCREASE TO INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE FUNDING FOR INDIAN HEALTH PROFESSIONS”

PREAMBLE

We, the members of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants rights secured under Indian Treaties, Executive Orders, and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and constitution of the United States and several states, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise to promote the welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) are representatives of and advocates for national, regional, and specific tribal concerns; and

WHEREAS, ATNI is a regional organization comprised of American Indians/Alaska Natives (AI/AN) and tribes in the states of Washington, Idaho, Oregon, Montana, Nevada, Northern California, and Alaska; and

WHEREAS, the health, safety, welfare, education, economic and employment opportunity, and preservation of cultural and natural resources are primary goals and objectives of the ATNI; now

WHEREAS, AI/ANs have very limited access to health care services and are disproportionately affected by health disparities and these disparities are directly attributed to the

lack of health professionals in Indian communities, which has caused a serious access issue and backlog of many health services for AI/AN people; and

WHEREAS, many tribes have great difficulty and face significant challenges in recruiting health professionals into their communities that results in further challenges in ensuring continuity and comprehensive healthcare for AI/AN people; and

WHEREAS, the current vacancy rates make it nearly impossible to run a quality health care system; and

WHEREAS, competition for primary care physicians and other practitioners is at an all-time high; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to 2016 Indian Health Service (IHS) Pipeline Program data, there are high vacancy rates (physicians-34%, pharmacists-16%, nurses-24%, dentists 26%, physician assistants-32%, AP nurses- 35%) in IHS facilities; and

WHEREAS, the long term solution is to increase the number of AI/AN health professionals serving Native communities and ensure that funding is available to support their education; and

WHEREAS, the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA) P.L. 94-437, as amended, authorizes IHS Scholarship Program, Loan Repayment Program, health professions training related grants, and recruitment and retention activities (“Indian Health Professions” Program); and

WHEREAS, in 2015, the IHS Scholarship Program funded:

- all 17 physicians and all 5 dentists who applied for the scholarship who were eligible by score;
- 17 of 25 (68%) of eligible physician assistants and nurse practitioners;
- 16 of 34 (47%) of eligible bachelor level nurses;
- 21 of 112 (19%) of eligible undergraduate pre-health professions students were funded; and

WHEREAS, all eligible unfunded student applicants to the IHS Scholarship Program were AI/AN from federal or state recognized tribes; and

WHEREAS, the IHS Loan Repayment Program pays \$20,000 annually in student loans which is \$5,000 less than the National Health Service Corps; and

WHEREAS, in 2015, 613 (33%) of the health professionals who applied for the Loan Repayment Program were not funded and only 19% of loan repayment recipients were AI/AN; and

WHEREAS, Indian Health Professions funding must reflect the significant workforce needs in Indian country and support our AI/AN people pursuing health professions; and

WHEREAS, for FY 2018, Indian Health Professions was funded at \$49 million, and for FY 2019, the President’s FY 2019 Budget Proposal for the Indian Health Service proposed a \$6 million dollar cut (-12.1%) to the program; and

WHEREAS, it has been estimated that \$33 million is needed for Indian Health Professions to fully fund the IHS Scholarship Program (\$3.3 million) and Loan Repayment Program for all eligible applicants; now

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that ATNI calls on Congress to support an Indian Health Service funding increase for IHS Indian Health Professions to fully fund scholarships for all qualified applicants to the IHS Scholarship Program and to support the Loan Repayment Program to fund all physicians, nurse practitioners, physician’s assistants, nurses and other direct care practitioners.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted at the 2018 Mid-Year Convention of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, held at the Legends Casino Hotel - Toppenish, Washington, on May 21-24, 2018, with a quorum present.



Leonard Forsman, President



Norma Jean Louie, Secretary