**RESOLUTION # 18-03-07**

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

**WHEREAS,** the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board {hereinafter "NPAIHB” or "Board" was established in 1972 to assist Tribal governments to improve the health status and quality of life of Indian people; and

**WHEREAS,** the NPAIHB is a "tribal organization" as defined by the Indian Self­ Determination and Education Assistance Act {P.L. 93-638 seq.et al) that represents forty-three federally recognized tribes in the states of Idaho, Oregon, and Washington (“member tribes”); and

**WHEREAS,** in accordance with the definitions of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act at 25 USC § 450b,a tribal organization is recognized as a governing body of any Indian tribe and includes any legally established organization of Indians which is controlled, sanctioned, or chartered by such governing body or which is democratically elected by the adult members of the Indian community to be served by such organization and which includes the maximum participation of Indians in all phases of its activities; and

**WHEREAS,** the NPAIHB is dedicated to assisting and promoting the health needs and concerns of Indian people; and

**WHEREAS,** the primary goal of the NPAIHB is to improve the health and quality of life of its member tribes; and

**WHEREAS,** American Indians/Alaska Natives (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 of our member 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 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

**WHEREA**S, the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA) P.L. 94-437, as amended, authorizes the Indian Health Service (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.

**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; and

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED,** that the NPAIHB and our member tribes call on Congress to support an Indian Health Service funding increase for IHS Indian Health Professions to fully fund scholarships for all qualified applicants to 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.