

The Honorable Jani Iwamoto  
Senator District 4  
4760 Highland Drive, Suite 427  
Salt Lake City, UT 84117

Dear Senator Iwamoto,

I am writing to support the Tribal governments request to create and fund an Office of Indian Health for the State of Utah. Having an office will increase the capacity to improve American Indian health disparities and the office will provide a centralized place to move plans forward.

Tribes in Utah have many health issues that need to be addressed and a single person cannot provide technical assistance, program outreach, and health promotion. Below are examples of a few of the health issues that Tribal leaders want addressed:

- Opioid crisis
- Medicaid expansion
- Maternal, child, and adolescent health
- Home visiting
- Women, infant and children
- Environmental health
- Public health emergency preparedness
- Immunizations
- Data sharing and Public health surveillance

An Office of Indian Health will assist in increasing the responsibilities for compliance of formal Tribal consultation to address state health and public health policies. Tribal consultation is very time consuming and a single person does not have the bandwidth to meet with Tribal leaders on various health policies to obtain a collective voice to address the number of health policies that arise.

Another issue is staffing to assist in the needs of Indian health. Grants provide additional personnel but they are short-term solutions since grants only last for a specific length of time. Permanent personnel are necessary to address overall health disparities and to improve health outcomes among the tribal populations in Utah and supporting and funding an office will provide this.

I encourage you to work with your colleagues and do all that you can to fund an Office of Indian Health.

Respectfully,

Sharon Austin, Ph.D., M.P.H.

Water's Edge Consulting