



UTAH NAVAJO HEALTH SYSTEM, INC.

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December 10, 2019

Dear members of the NALLC,

The Utah Navajo Health System's (UNHS) board of directors continues to value the partnership it has with the Utah Department of Health (UDOH). We believe our collaboration has positively impacted healthcare along the northern strip of the Navajo Nation. The support of the UDOH has allowed UNHS to provide direct care to some of the most underserved and geographically remote residents in Utah.

Navajo patients have unique needs. They have social-economic challenges that most patients along the Wasatch Front do not understand. Vast rural areas and economic challenges make combatting diabetes, cardiovascular disease and obesity more challenging on Navajo.

We support Senator Iwamoto's goal of creating an Indian Health Department at the UDOH. We believe that funding staff positions who will focus on the specific needs of Native Americans will allow the UDOH to become more patient focused to the needs of our Navajo patients. The new department can also foster a stronger cultural sensitivity to Native Americans in the State.

Thank you for allowing UNHS' board to offer input on Senator Iwamoto's proposed bill. We fully support her in this endeavor. And we continue to appreciate the ongoing guidance and assistance of the Department of Health.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Melinda Farley', written in a cursive style.

Melinda Farley,
Board Chairperson

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