

# Support the Health Needs of Native Children

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) is dedicated to ensuring American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) children have access to the health services and public health programs they need to thrive. Over one-third of the AI/AN population is under the age of 15. AI/AN children often live in remote, medically underserved areas and face significant health disparities compared to the national average. The AAP strongly supports federal policies designed to improve the health systems serving AI/AN children to promote their lifelong health and development.

## Provide Strong Funding Support for the Indian Health Service

- The AAP appreciates that Congress has continued to prioritize appropriations for the health needs of Native children.
- Despite important increases in recent years, the Indian Health Service (IHS) still falls far short of the funding needed to ensure optimal health for AI/AN children.
- We urge you to provide at least \$5.185 billion for the IHS in FY 2017, including:
  - \$49.3 million for scholarships, loan repayment, and other health provider recruitment and retention tools
  - \$3.6 million for the Zero Suicide Initiative
  - \$15 million through Generation Indigenous to expand the Substance Use and Suicide Prevention Program

## Co-Sponsor the Indian Health Service Advance Appropriations Act (H.R. 395).

- Advance appropriations would provide IHS with appropriations bills that cover a year out beyond the immediate fiscal year. The funds would not be available until the fiscal year for which they are indicated begins.
- Advance appropriations would not add any cost to the current fiscal year. The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has received such advance appropriations since 2009.
- This policy would benefit AI/AN children by providing IHS budgeting continuity and a better ability to plan longer-term. This would improve pediatric health services, public health programs, and the recruitment and retention of pediatricians working in Indian Country.

## Co-Sponsor the Indian Health Service Health Professionals Tax Fairness Act (S. 536/ H.R. 1842).

- Student loan repayment is a critical tool for recruiting and retaining health professionals, including pediatricians.
- Recruiting and retaining pediatricians is essential to ensuring that AI/AN children have access to continuity of health services in a medical home.
- The *IHS Health Professionals Tax Fairness Act* (S. 536/ H.R. 1842) would provide the same tax exemption for IHS loan repayment available for the National Health Service Corps, supporting improved and expanded pediatric provider recruitment and retention in Indian Country.

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