

June 15, 2017

The Honorable Kristi Noem
2422 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Letter of Support— *Restoring Accountability in the Indian Health Service (IHS) Act*.

Dear Rep. Noem,

It is with a sense of urgency that this letter of support is written on behalf of the South Dakota Association of Healthcare Organizations (SDAHO). We strongly support the *Restoring Accountability in the IHS Act of 2017* and believe the provisions contained in the proposed legislation will provide much need improvements to a broken system of care.

The delivery of health care services at IHS hospitals to tribal communities in South Dakota is in “crisis” condition. IHS must meet the same quality, safety, and operational standards as all other hospitals, but repeatedly it has failed to do so.

Tribal communities have had to endure substandard care and hardship, such as the closing of the emergency services at IHS facilities in the state. The harm from losing such essential services is linked to loss of life and other poor health outcomes. The current situation must be improved.

For years, federal reports have documented cases of mismanagement and poorly delivered care at Indian Health Service (IHS) facilities. The *Restoring Accountability in the IHS Act* seeks to:

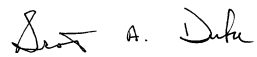
- Allow for easier hiring and firing and providing recruitment and retention incentives
- Require development and dissemination of standards to improve timeliness of care
- Ensure fiscal accountability within the HIS
- Require reports from the United States Government Accountability Office, Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General and IHS related to staffing, a staff housing plan and patient care

These tools should significantly improve recruitment of medical staff and other leadership positions, advance care standards and dramatically increase accountability.

In addition, the effects of the current dire situation have had a profound impact on the state and region. SDAHO member hospitals have actively assisted and experienced dramatic increases in emergency patient volumes and other services. These situations are unpredictable, difficult to manage and this legislation is urgently needed to ensure sustainable improvements are achieved.

Again, we wholeheartedly support the *Restoring Accountability in the IHS Act of 2017*.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott A. Duke". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

Scott A. Duke
President/CEO

Cc: Curt Hohman, Chair, Board of Trustees