



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

The National Congress of American Indians  
Resolution #ABQ-19-064

**TITLE: Support for Health IT Modernization at the Indian Health Services**

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**WHEREAS**, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

**WHEREAS**, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) tribal governments; and

**WHEREAS**, the National Indian Health Board (NIHB), established in 1972, serves all federally recognized AI/AN tribal governments by advocating for the improvement of health care delivery to AI/ANs, as well as upholding the federal government's trust responsibility to AI/AN tribal governments; and

**WHEREAS**, a majority of service delivery sites within the Indian health system utilize the Resource and Patient Management System (RPMS), a health information system which is a comprehensive suite of applications that supports virtually all clinical and business operations at IHS and some tribal facilities, from patient registration to billing; and

**WHEREAS**, RPMS is based on the current Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Health IT system, known as VistA; and

**WHEREAS**, the Indian Health Services (IHS) has been unable to keep pace with the technological advances of Commercial Off-the-Shelf (COTS) Electronic Health Records (EHR) and has been unable to achieve timely, consistent EHR certification as required by the federal government; and

**WHEREAS**, more tribal nations are choosing to leave RPMS because IHS has not been able to properly maintain and update the system; and

**WHEREAS**, the VA has announced that they will be transitioning away from VistA and adopting the Cerner COTS; and

**WHEREAS**, in light of this change, IHS cannot count on ongoing support and maintenance that the VA provided for VistA, which also supported RPMS; and

**WHEREAS**, IHS must create and execute a strategy to modernize its Health IT system that will serve all tribal nations in Indian Country and reflect tribal input, needs, and priorities; and

**WHEREAS**, tribal nations have voiced that the greatest challenge of Health IT Modernization has been the lack of dedicated and sustained funding to adequately support Health IT infrastructure, including full deployment and support for EHR; and

**WHEREAS**, the next EHR system that IHS adopts must be interoperable with other EHRs adopted by tribal nations, as well as other federal agencies like the VA and Department of Defense (DOD).


**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) work with the NIHB in calling upon IHS to conduct meaningful tribal consultation before moving forward with its Health IT modernization strategy; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NCAI work with the NIHB to request that Congress create a separate budgetary line item dedicated to Health IT modernization that is informed by tribal consultation and honors the amount requested by the tribal nations; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that this resolution shall be the policy of NCAI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

#### CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2019 Annual Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Albuquerque Convention Center, October 20-25, 2019, with a quorum present.

  
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Fawn Sharp, President

**ATTEST:**

  
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Juana Majel Dixon, Recording Secretary