



# NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

## The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #PDX-20-017

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### **TITLE: Calling for Increased Funding for Health Care and Sanitation Infrastructure for American Indian/Alaska Native Tribal Nations**

**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 and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 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 tribal governments; and

**WHEREAS**, on March 13, 2020, the President of the United States declared the COVID-19 pandemic to be a National Emergency effective March 1, 2020; and

**WHEREAS**, the National COVID-19 Public Health Emergency and Economic Crisis has afflicted all Americans, with over 10.5 million cases reported and over 242,000 fatalities as of November 12, 2020; and

**WHEREAS**, Across America, tribal nations patriotically responded to the COVID-19 Pandemic by suspending Indian gaming, hospitality, and ancillary businesses in the First and Second Quarters. When Tribal Government Gaming, Hospitality and tribal businesses re-opened in May and June, capacity was generally limited to a maximum of 50 percent to allow social distancing; masks were recommended and required; and temperature checks, hand sanitizing and intense cleaning regimens were implemented to protect employees and patrons. Conventions, concerts, and events are cancelled. Some tribal businesses that reopened have had to shut down again one or more times to control the spread of the virus. Other tribal businesses have remained closed for eight months; and

**WHEREAS**, this massive economic blow falls on those of us at the greatest health risk. Native Americans are among those hit hardest by National COVID-19 Coronavirus, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Per capita, Native Americans have the highest infection rates, the highest risk of hospitalization and serious injury, followed closely by African Americans and Hispanic Americans; and

**WHEREAS**, CDC explains the perfect storm of factors putting American Indian/Alaska Native Tribal Nations at greatest risk: minority communities' inequitable and limited access to healthcare and education; the prevalence of essential work jobs that do not allow for social distancing; intense housing density and lack of quarantine facilities; and long-standing income and wealth gaps—all negatively impact health status. The Washington Post reports, "Hispanics and Native Americans have made up an increasing proportion of Covid-19 deaths. The disease now accounts for nearly 20 percent of all deaths among those groups." These deaths are tragic losses to our communities; and

**WHEREAS**, when Congress enacted and the President signed into law the CARES Act on March 27, 2020, the State-Local-Tribal Government Coronavirus Relief Fund included \$8 Billion for Tribal Governments to address necessary expenses related to COVID-19 and directed that such funds be expended by December 30, 2020; and

**WHEREAS**, tribal Governments responded to the CARES Act by developing plans to expend the Coronavirus Relief Funds and these initial funds have largely been allocated and expended; and

**WHEREAS**, tribal Governments are devastated. Tribal nations lack the tax base available to our sister governments. Our tribal government revenues fund essential services, including schools, health care, police and fire, child and elder care, water, sewer and sanitation services—and lacking a tax base, those services are nearly entirely funded with income from tribal businesses. The loss of these tribal government revenues is a catastrophic loss for the health and well-being of our tribal communities; and

**WHEREAS**, to slow and stop the spread of COVID-19 and to alleviate economic suffering and unemployment, Congress should enact further Coronavirus Relief, including State-Local-and-Tribal Government CRF Relief, individual relief, testing, contact tracing, and vaccine funding; Health Care support; Education Support; Paycheck Protection Program support for small business with 500 employees or less; among other things; and

**WHEREAS**, on October 6, 2020, Federal Reserve Chairman Powell warned of a "tragic" scenario where "a long period of unnecessarily slow progress could continue to exacerbate existing disparities in our economy." He said too little support from policymakers would "lead to a weak recovery, creating unnecessary hardship for households and businesses...." Powell forecasted that without further congressional relief, "Over time, household insolvencies and business bankruptcies would rise, harming the productive capacity of the economy, and holding back wage growth," he said. "By contrast, the risks of overdoing it seem, for now, to be smaller. Even if policy actions ultimately prove to be greater than needed, they will not go to waste;" and

**WHEREAS**, the Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House, and Senator Chuck Schumer have called for \$350 Billion in Infrastructure funding for Communities of Color, including tribal nations and tribal governments; and

**WHEREAS**, H.R. 2 is intended to "modernize our badly aging infrastructure, stimulates our economy, creates millions of good paying jobs, and addresses climate change. Investment in our infrastructure is critical, especially now that millions of Americans have lost their jobs due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic;" and

**WHEREAS**, the bill is intended to provide \$30 billion to upgrade our nation's health infrastructure and build new infrastructure where needed, including upgrades to hospitals and community health centers, improvements to clinical laboratory infrastructure to reduce wait times for COVID-19 testing results, increases to the overall capacity for community-based care in America, and invests over \$47 billion in drinking water programs and infrastructure to get pollutants like PFAS and lead out of our water.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) urges the Congress and the President to enact funding provisions for health care and sanitation infrastructure found in H.R. 2, or similar legislation, and that should the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress adjourn without passing H.R. 2 into law this session, or including its provisions in a COVID-19 stimulus measure, that NCAI further urges elected tribal officials to advocate to the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress that convenes in January 2021 and to the next administration to retain and approve H.R. 2's tribal provisions to further empower innovative proposals to accomplish the purposes contained in this resolution; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NCAI calls upon Congress and the President to fully include tribal nations and tribal governments in infrastructure for public health facility construction and rehabilitation; and

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

### CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2020 Annual Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held Nov 8, 2020 - Nov 13, 2020, with a quorum present.



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Fawn Sharp, President

**ATTEST:**



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Juana Majel Dixon, Recording Secretary