



Talking Points on Federal Funding Freeze

Trust & Treaty Obligations—A Commitment That Must Be Upheld

- The federal government has a trust and treaty obligation to Tribal Nations, including the duty to provide healthcare. This is not just a policy priority—it is a legal and moral responsibility.
- This relationship has been repeatedly upheld in the Constitution, statutes, Supreme Court cases, and other legal precedents.
- The Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCA) affirms that the federal government must ensure the highest possible health status for American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs).

The Impact of Funding Freezes on the Indian Health System

- The recent OMB memorandum (M-25-13) created uncertainty and confusion, disrupting Tribal and Urban Indian healthcare operations. While the memo was rescinded, its effects underscore the risk of future funding freezes.
- These disruptions forced Tribal Indian health programs to reschedule appointments, prepare for potential staff reductions, and navigate operational instability—all of which impact patient care.
- Federal funding for Indian health must be protected from such disruptions in the future to ensure continuity of care and uphold federal commitments.

Protecting Lives & Preventing Harm

- When funding is delayed or frozen, it creates real and immediate consequences for patients and providers—even a temporary halt in funding could immediately deprive people and communities of their life-saving services.
- Indian healthcare facilities serve some of the most vulnerable populations, including elders, children, and those in urgent need of care. Any disruption to services places these individuals at risk.
- During the 2019 government shutdown, some Tribal Indian health programs were forced to reduce services or close temporarily, with serious health consequences in their communities. These situations must not be repeated.

A Path Forward: Ensuring Stability in Indian Health Funding

- Congress must take proactive steps to prevent future funding freezes or delays from affecting the Indian health system.
- A clear exemption for Tribal healthcare funding from administrative holds or freezes would provide the stability needed to ensure uninterrupted services.
- We urge Congress and the Administration to work collaboratively with Tribal Nations to uphold the trust and treaty obligation to Indian health.

Working Together to Honor Federal Commitments

- Tribal leaders, health providers, and advocates stand ready to work with Congress and the administration to ensure that funding uncertainties do not undermine healthcare for Indian Country.
- The National Indian Health Board looks forward to engaging in meaningful dialogue to protect and strengthen the Indian health system for future generations.

