

June 9, 2016

The Honorable Kristi Noem
United States House of Representatives
2422 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Noem:

The South Dakota Dental Association (SDDA) greatly appreciates your efforts to improve the health of Native Americans through an amendment to the Indian Health Care Improvement Act.

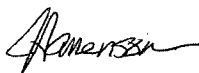
The SDDA has endeavored to improve the oral health of Native Americans living in our state. We have worked cooperatively with many of the Tribes, the Great Plains Tribal Chairmen's Health Board, Delta Dental, the Indian Health Service and the St. Francis Mission. As a member of the South Dakota Oral Health Coalition we hosted the first-ever Native American Oral Health Summit in South Dakota in 2012. More than 100 individuals attended this event. "Shared responsibility" was the resounding message that came out of the summit – meaning oral health of Native American people is not the responsibility of any one person or organization, but the collective responsibility of many, including all those in attendance that day.

At least two sustainable projects blossomed following the summit: The Circle of Smiles Program and the dental clinic at the St. Francis Mission. As a result of our work with the Tribes and the Indian Health Service (IHS) we have become acutely aware of the short-comings of IHS. It appears the organization is neither properly funded nor properly managed and is in desperate need of reform.

One of the SDDA's main initiatives following the summit was to host "Rosebud Dental Days" - a project utilizing volunteers at the St. Francis Mission, the Delta Dental Dakota Smiles Mobile Program and the IHS to provide badly needed dental care. Issues regarding the credentialing process made the IHS's role in this endeavor almost a complete failure. We continue to help staff the Mission Dental Clinic with volunteers and Delta's Mobile Program continues to serve communities in Rosebud, but our frustrations with the credentialing requirements of the IHS have prevented us from placing any further volunteers at an IHS facility in South Dakota.

Thank you for introducing the amendment. Your proposals are a step in the right direction. Please let us know if we can help in any way.

Sincerely,



Jason Aanenson, DDS
President