



Seattle Indian Health Board

For the Love of Native People

April 16, 2018

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
U.S. Senate
317 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings
U.S. House of Representatives
2163 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Warren and Congressman Cummings,

On behalf of the Seattle Indian Health Board (SIHB), we are writing to express our support for your legislation, the Comprehensive Addiction Resources Emergency (CARE) Act of 2018. The opioid epidemic poses one of the most significant public health threats in recent history and has devastated our American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported an opioid overdose rate of 8.4 per 100,000 for AI/ANs, second only to Whites. Our Indian Health Service (IHS) IHS Direct, Tribal 638, and Urban Indian Health Program (I/T/U) system of care is on the frontlines of our nation's response to this public health crisis, and the CARE Act would provide important support for our efforts to stem the tide of overdoses and fatalities that have disproportionately affected our AI/AN communities.

Addressing the opioid epidemic is a nationwide priority; however, access to critical opioid prevention and treatment dollars are not reaching many of the AI/AN communities that are in serious need of these funds. The CARE Act addresses this problem by providing urgently needed support to tribes throughout the country that have been disproportionately affected by the opioid epidemic. This legislation would provide funding directly to tribes and local governments that are leading the response to this crisis on the ground, and calls for expedited distribution of funding. Furthermore, the bill calls for grantees to establish or designate a local planning council made up of various local stakeholders, including health care, social services and behavioral health providers, as well as tribal governments, law enforcement agencies, and local coroners. This structure facilitates the tailoring of solutions to the needs of local communities, including better data collection and analysis to address racial misclassification and strengthen culturally attuned care, ultimately making for more effective and efficient allocation of resources and better outcomes for individuals struggling with addiction. Importantly, this legislation also ensures that the federal Trust Responsibility to provide health care for AI/AN people will be recognized and upheld at all levels of program administration.

We look forward to continuing to work with your offices to advance our common goal of putting an end to the opioid epidemic and making our AI/AN communities more resistant to addiction.

Sincerely,

Esther Lucero, (Dine') CEO
Seattle Indian Health Board

Aren Sparck, (Cup'ik), Government Affairs Officer
Seattle Indian Health Board