

**UNITED TRIBES
OF NORTH DAKOTA**

Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyaté | Spirit Lake Tribe
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe | Three Affiliated Tribes
Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians

UNITED TRIBES OF NORTH DAKOTA
Resolution #17-09-08-05

**TITLE: Support for North Dakota Legislation Authorizing
Dental Health Assistant Therapists**

WHEREAS, United Tribes of North Dakota ("United Tribes") is the inter-tribal association of the five federally recognized Tribes co-located with North Dakota, each of which has a government-to-government relationship with the United States government established by Treaty, including the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyaté, the Spirit Lake Tribe, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, the Three Affiliated Tribes, and the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians, with a Board of Directors composed of the Chairman and one council member from each member Tribe; and

WHEREAS, United Tribes, founded in 1968, exists to further the common goals of the Indian Tribes and Nations co-located with North Dakota; and

WHEREAS, There is a present high unmet need for dental care among many North Dakotans, particularly within our Native population, due in part to the lack of enough dentist available to serve our reservations and the off-reservation Native populations; and

WHEREAS, American Indians have a higher prevalence of dental caries and untreated tooth decay in all age groups compared to the general United States population, with many Native children experiencing dental caries before the age of two; and

WHEREAS, There are few dental caries prevention programs that target Native American children, and poor oral health issues persist disproportionately for the Native American population such as:

- Over eighty percent of Native children aged 2-4 years have dental caries;
- Eight out of 10 (83%) Native children between 6-9 years of age had a history of decay in their primary or permanent teeth, compared to 45% of children in the general U.S. population
- Almost half of 6-9 year-old Native children (47%) had untreated decay. This compares to 17% of 6-9 year-old children in the general U.S. population

- Despite a trend toward a reduction in tooth loss in the U.S. population, older data indicate 25 percent of Native people aged 35 to 44 years have fewer than 20 natural teeth;
- Among all persons aged 55 years and older, nearly 75 percent have fewer than 20 natural teeth;
- Fifty-nine percent of Native adults have periodontal (gum) disease;
- Seventy-eight percent Native adults 35-44 years and 98 percent of elders (55 or older) have at least one tooth removed because of decay, trauma, or gum disease; and

WHEREAS, These disparities can be directly attributed to a lack of enough dental health professionals in the Indian health system in which IHS dental providers have a patient load of 2,800 patients per provider, while general population providers have approximately 1,500 patients per provider and the IHS experiences a very high dental provider vacancy rate, with estimates that 26 percent of the dental positions within the IHS are vacant, which contributes to the lack of access to dental health services; and

WHEREAS, In our treaties, health care was guaranteed in perpetuity in exchange for our Nations ceding land which now comprises the State of North Dakota; and

WHEREAS, Poor dental care is often a life sentence to poverty, as it is accompanied with a decline in self-confidence and often a loss of academic and economic opportunities due to social perceptions of poor dental hygiene, contributing to cyclical generational impoverishment in Indian Country; and

WHEREAS, North Dakota does not have enough dentists to meet the needs of our state and communities. As a result, thousands of North Dakotans do not have access to quality, affordable dental care when they need it and where they live. This includes children, elders, people with disabilities, working families and Veterans in rural, Tribal, and underserved communities; and

WHEREAS, Dental Health Aide Therapists are able to help fill some of this gap. They have been in existence and thoroughly evaluated for safety, quality, and appropriate scope of practice in Alaska with the Alaska Native patient population in collaboration with the United States Indian Health Service; and

WHEREAS, Dental Health Aide Therapists work as part of the dental team under the supervision of dentists and have received high results and accolades from patients, health care professionals, and community leaders in the U.S. and in over 50 other countries; and

WHEREAS, Although the Indian Health Service (IHS) which fulfills the treaty obligation to provide health services to Indian Tribes is a federal agency, current federal law states that IHS can only utilize DHATs, through the Community Health Aid

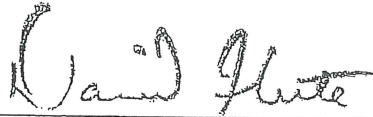
Program (CHAP), if a state legislature agrees. Therefore we need the assistance of North Dakota to provide the necessary dental needs to our people; and

WHEREAS, North Dakota passing legislation to allow for the hiring of Dental Health Aide Therapists would permit federal U.S. Indian Health Service funding to be used by Tribes to utilize Dental Therapists as part of the dental team; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the United Tribes of North Dakota request that the State of North Dakota pass legislation authorizing Dental Health Aide Therapists in order to empower tribes and the Indian Health Service to provide desperately needed dental care to our communities.

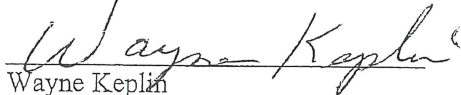
CERTIFICATION

The undersigned hereby certifies that the foregoing resolution was duly passed at a telephonic meeting of the Board of Directors of United Tribes at which a quorum was present, held on the 8th day of September, 2017, with a vote of 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstaining, and 2 not present.



Dave Flute
Chairman, Board of Directors
United Tribes of North Dakota

ATTEST:



Wayne Keplin
Secretary, Board of Directors
United Tribes of North Dakota