

RESOLUTION
NATIVE AMERICAN BOARD OF DIRECTORS
BENEFIS HEALTH SYSTEM

WHEREAS the Benefis Health System Native American Board of Directors was created for the purpose of working in partnership with Tribal and other Native American communities, existing governmental agencies, the Indian Health Service (including the Urban Health Clinics) and Tribal Health to reduce health disparities and ensure optimal health and wellbeing for all Native Americans. The partnerships and programs are guided by standards of care, cultural principles, and community values to eliminate health disparities; and

WHEREAS the Board of Directors consists of duly appointed Tribal Members who are fully authorized to represent their respective Tribes; and

WHEREAS Native American Board of Directors of Benefis Health System is dedicated to assisting and promoting the health needs and concerns of Indian people; and

WHEREAS, the health status of American Indians is far below the general population, the unmet health needs are significant, and an unacceptable health disparity exists in Montana where the life expectancy of American Indians is 20 years less than the rest of the population; and

WHEREAS those covered under Montana's Medicaid Expansion includes over 15,000 American Indians; and

WHEREAS, in 2021, Medicaid Expansion provided coverage to more than 19,000 American Indian people in Montana, covered more than 9,000 preventive services, and expanded health care access for all tribal members; and

WHEREAS, Medicaid Expansion has infused crucial funds into local communities, tribal and urban Indian health organizations and hospitals resulting in American Indians benefitting from improved access to quality medical care, including prevention programs; and

WHEREAS job opportunities are severely limited and chronic unemployment exists in most Montana reservation communities; and

WHEREAS increased access to reliable healthcare is a cornerstone of a viable workforce and tribal community; and

WHEREAS, Montana is a small business state, with over 1,500 small businesses owned by Native Americans, and expanded Medicaid provides small business employees access to healthcare coverage; and

WHEREAS, the HELP Act has significantly stimulated Montana's economy according to the Montana Healthcare Foundation which reported that the HELP Act has created and sustained over 7,500 new jobs, generated an estimated \$475 million in new personal income, and fueled \$775 million in additional economic activity to Montana's economy in 2022; and

WHEREAS, as reported in 2019, the HELP Act has served as an economic incentive for small businesses by providing health coverage worth \$353.6 million to \$941.2 million to nearly 60 percent of Montana employers; and

WHEREAS mandatory Medicaid work requirements erect barriers for American Indians and a Medicaid community service hour quota reporting requirement not only creates the same costly administrative barriers to health care as work hour quota reporting requirements, it would also force low-income people to work for a non-monetary benefit; and

WHEREAS, creating and sustaining a healthy workforce is key to addressing our state's workforce shortage, by ensuring that the working-age adults in our state remain able to work; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Native American Board of Directors of Benefis Health System endorses the HELP Act and supports repealing the sunset of the Act and further recognizes our local businesses and the tribal citizens of Montana have a compelling interest in ensuring access to health care for a healthier workforce and reduced health care costs borne by our tribes and local businesses; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Native American Board of Directors of Benefis Health System strongly requests our legislative delegation and the Montana Legislature protect health care coverage for the almost 100,000 Montanans and the \$2.1 billion economic engine it has created by repealing the sunset of the HELP Act.

APPROVED ON THIS 12th DAY OF April, 2024 BY THE NATIVE AMERICAN BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF BENEFIS HEALTH SYSTEM.



Charles Headdress
Board Chair
Native American Board of Directors



Rayn Ginnaty
President
Benefis Great Falls Hospitals