

Indian Health Fund

The Association on American Indian Affairs called on President Richard M. Nixon to order the release of the \$2 million supplemental appropriation for the Indian Health Service.

The monies, which were voted by Congress, have been impounded by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

The AAIA stressed the urgent need for these funds in order to continue the essential work of the Indian Health Service among the Indian population, whose health is currently in serious jeopardy.

In a joint letter to President Nixon, Roger C. Ernst, President of the AAIA and Dr. Carl Muschenheim, Chairman of AAIA's National Committee on Indian Health stated that health conditions among Indians are today the worst for any group in the nation.

"Many Indian hospitals in the United States lack personnel and facilities to such an extent that the survival of Indian patients is severely jeopardized," the letter continued.

The AAIA pointed out that the Indian Health Service attempts to operate its direct patient care program with 164 employees per 100 average daily patients (rather than 250 per 100 average daily patients which is required by good practice) and 47.8 employees per 100,000 outpatient visits (rather than 120 employees per 100,000 outvisits required.)

An epidemic of viral pneumonia in the pediatrics ward of the Choctaw Indian hospital in 1968 was cited as an example of the effect of personnel and facilities shortages in the Indian health program.

Mr. Ernst and Dr. Muschenheim added that the immunizations to 400 Indian students at the Sequoyah Indian School were discontinued due to a shortage of supplies.

"How tragic it will be," they said, if Indian disease rates, which have been declining nationally since the Public Health Service undertook this program, should begin to rise once again."