

To: All IHS

Today is the 2-year anniversary of my first day as Director of the Indian Health Service. I am proud of the work we have done to begin the hard work of changing and improving the Indian Health Service. While we have much more work to do, I believe we have begun some fundamental changes in the way we do business that will strengthen our organization over the long term.

We have made progress on our agency priorities, including stronger partnerships with our Tribes, progress on IHS reforms including improvements in our financial management and hiring process, implementation activities for the Affordable Care Act and the Indian Health Care Improvement Act reauthorization, specific activities to improve the quality of and access to care, such as the expansion and improvements in our Improving Patient Care initiative as well as our customer service efforts, and our activities to make our work more transparent accountable, fair and inclusive through better communication internally and with our external stakeholders.

The recent increases in our budget have helped address the significant need for healthcare services in the communities we serve but it is clear we all have to work hard to try to meet our mission with available resources. IHS has always faced challenges over the years, and it is clear we may face further challenges in the days ahead. However, I remain optimistic that we can make significant progress during this time of extraordinary support from our President, our Secretary, and bipartisan support in Congress.

I have attached the text from my recent presentation at the Advances in Indian Health Conference so you can learn more about all the things we are doing to change and improve the IHS. I know that some of you are seeing improvements where you work and in some places there is much more to do to improve, but we must continue with this important and, at times, difficult work to reform IHS. If it was easy to "fix" IHS, someone would have already done it. It is taking hard work, persistence, and creative/innovative solutions and I want to reassure you that while change is difficult and challenging, we are making progress. I hear about progress every day and I appreciate everyone who is helping us change and improve for the better. We need to demonstrate that we are willing to change and improve to get the support we need.

Thank you for all your efforts to change and improve the IHS. I hear stories of the great work you do and know that there are IHS, Tribal and urban Indian health program employees who are doing extraordinary work each and every day to provide quality healthcare to the patients we serve. I appreciate your hard work and dedication to our mission.

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Director