

Rear Admiral Michael D. Weahkee, Director
Indian Health Service
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Director Weahkee,

I am a member of the Pueblo of Acoma and I'm writing to express my strong opposition to yours and the Indian Health Service (IHS) decision to close our hospital, the Acoma, Canoncito, Laguna medical facility. My family and other tribal members here at the Pueblo cannot understand why the IHS would do this. We want to know why the federal government would deny us access to emergency medical services and inpatient care especially in the middle of a pandemic that's out of control in our state. We have seen the number of COVID cases increase daily here in New Mexico and your decision to shut it down makes no sense. In my opinion, it is not only irresponsible, but wrong.

Our community and our extended families have been suffering from the impact of COVID 19. Many have become gravely ill from the virus and some have died. Our community relies on the ACL hospital for almost all of our medical needs. But, we are now being told that if we get seriously ill or get sick with the Corona Virus after hours, we won't get treated at ACL and if we need to be hospitalized, we have to drive ourselves into Albuquerque or Gallup, both about 70 miles away. This also makes no sense when we have a hospital located right here on Acoma tribal lands.

We are extremely concerned about our elderly. We have grandparents and older relatives who depend on the ACL hospital as well as the doctors, and nurses for their medical needs. We are told many of the primary doctors and other medical providers have left the hospital because of a loss in funding and a reduction in services. Where are the elderly supposed to go? We have relatives with underlying health conditions like diabetes who could easily get sick with the virus. We also have family members who have served in the armed forces, who fought for this country. They don't deserve to be treated like this. Nobody does. Your agency's decision has put all of us at risk. This isn't right. The federal government should not be turning its back on us, especially now when the pandemic is still raging across our country. We are citizens of the United States of America. We deserve better from you and the Indian Health Service.

I respectfully demand that the Indian Health Service keep the ACL hospital open, 24/7, fully staffed and sufficiently funded and restore complete emergency medical services and inpatient care, now. Our lives and our health here at Pueblo are at stake.

Sincerely,