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(202) 224-3744
www.grassley.senate.gov
- ☐ 721 FEDERAL BUILDING
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(515) 288-1145
- ☐ 111 7TH AVENUE, SE, BOX 13
SUITE 6800
CEDAR RAPIDS, IA 52401-2101
(319) 363-6832

United States Senate

CHARLES E. GRASSLEY
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE EMERITUS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1501

REPLY TO:

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- ☐ 201 WEST 2ND STREET
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- ☐ 307 FEDERAL BUILDING
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November 1, 2021

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

Acting Director Elizabeth A. Fowler
Indian Health Service
5600 Fisher Lane, Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Acting Director Fowler,

After a successful FOIA request from media, the public is now able to access a January 2020 report regarding the Indian Health Service (IHS) and its response to sexual abuse allegations against Stanley Patrick Weber. Weber had long been a pediatrician for the IHS and was assigned to several hospitals, including the Pine Ridge clinic in Pine Ridge, South Dakota, and the Blackfeet Community Hospital in Browning, Montana.

During his almost two-decade career, the report found repeated and well-founded allegations by many of Weber's coworkers that he was sexually abusing his young patients. Despite repeated attempts to report Weber's actions to those at the top, these complaints went undocumented and were never formally investigated.

Not only that, but Weber's supervisors actively worked against the very whistleblowers who suspected his abuse. Instead of removing the man who had been repeatedly, credibly accused of sexually abusing his patients, he was promoted to manage those who witnessed his crimes.

By contrast, the whistleblowers were punished. The report states that one of the primary whistleblowers, Dr. Mark Butterbrodt, was "banished" to the "very remote and rural facility" in Belcourt, North Dakota. He resigned shortly thereafter. This type of treatment had a direct impact on those who later considered speaking out. The report states that "nurses told Dr. Butterbrodt that now he could see why they never speak up."

The IHS provides health care to millions of Native Americans. These patients deserve access to safe healthcare without fear of assault. Further, the IHS employs over 15,000 nurses, physicians, and other caregivers. It is imperative that these men and women feel empowered to blow the whistle on any and all abuse and misconduct – without fear of retribution.

Today, I call on you to ensure this egregious miscarriage of justice does not occur in the future. It is imperative that the IHS prevents caregivers from using their power to abuse and harm our children.

RANKING MEMBER,
JUDICIARY

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INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL

Consequently, I ask that you respond to the below questions by November 31, 2021 and please number your responses.

1. What steps has the IHS taken to prevent abuse of this kind going forward?
2. What current procedures are now in place to ensure victims and whistleblowers of abuse can report their experience without fear of consequence or retribution? If so, please provide copies of any written procedures.
3. Has the IHS implemented trainings to ensure that its employees are aware of how to properly report whistleblower complaints and respond to these complaints?
4. What are you doing to ensure the IHS does not hire any physician with a record of malpractice or sexual assault?

Should you have any questions please reach out to Reid Willis at (202) 224-3744. I look forward to working with you to further protect our nation's children, and anticipate your thorough response.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator

*if you know about
one of my main interests as
a Senator it is
respecting whistleblowers!*

RANKING MEMBER,
JUDICIARY

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