



**RESOLUTION 26-02**

***Committing to An Integrated, Multi-Sectoral Approach to Enhance the Impact of Priority Health Interventions and Mitigate the Drivers of Ill Health in the Micronesian Region as a Development Priority***

**ACKNOWLEDGING** health as a critical component of sustainable economic development across the Pacific region; and

**RECOGNIZING** the interconnectedness of political, social, environmental, and economic determinants of health in shaping the well-being and quality of life of individuals and communities in the Micronesian region; and

**EMPHASIZING** the importance of a collaborative and integrated multi-sectoral framework of health action among regional leaders, government agencies, healthcare professionals, and stakeholders to address acute, chronic, and emerging health challenges effectively; and

**REAFFIRMING** the MIF Leaders' commitment to promote universal health coverage, access to quality and comprehensive health services, and the advancement of health infrastructure, technologies, and capacities in the region, and that regional cooperation plays an integral role in our shared pursuit to achieve these long-term and sustainable priority commitments for a healthy Micronesian region; and

**WHEREAS**, social, economic, and environmental determinants of health significantly impact health-seeking behaviors and the well-being of individuals and communities in the Micronesian region, and addressing these determinants is essential to improving health outcomes. Such determinants include, but are not limited to, individual and community access to safe and secure housing, food security, adequate living wages, public transportation, social welfare services, and quality education, and climate change; and

**WHEREAS** the prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and various types of cancers continue to be the leading causes of morbidity and mortality across the Micronesian region. The Micronesian region has some of the highest rates of obesity globally, compounded by the lack of healthy nutrition and physical activity, and high substance abuse rates amongst youth and adults. These emphasize the need for going beyond the status quo and upscaling investments and actions for comprehensive and evidence-based innovative strategies, within and beyond the health sector, to prevent, detect, and manage these health conditions effectively; and

**WHEREAS** the adoption and expansion of telehealth and telemedicine technology have demonstrated potential to improve access to health and other social services and to address



disparities in healthcare access and delivery, particularly to remote areas with limited infrastructure where current investments are sporadic and tenuous. To assure optimal use, impact, and sustainability of telehealth and telemedicine (and associated technologies and IT infrastructure), the health sector's technology development needs must be integrated and embedded within government-wide information, communication, technology (ICT) and workforce development strategies, and planning processes; and

**WHEREAS** there is a pressing need to recruit and retain health workers and specialists in the Micronesian region to meet the increasing public demand for quality and comprehensive primary, secondary, and tertiary health services, necessitating expanded investments in workforce development, including training pathways and improving recruitment and retention strategies; and

**WHEREAS** recognizing that individual jurisdictions in the Micronesian region may not have the resources to hire and retain all necessary health specialties or capabilities, there needs to be consideration to supporting a regional approach and framework for sharing limited health specialists across jurisdictional borders. This includes sharing certain capabilities with other jurisdictions, such as the future build-up of the Guam Public Health Training and Laboratory Facility that can be utilized by other jurisdictions in need of level 2 and above laboratory diagnostic and associated training services; and

**WHEREAS** integrating health considerations into government policies and other government sector decision-making processes is crucial to promoting and implementing integrated approaches to holistic health and well-being and ensuring cross-government accountabilities to health; and

**WHEREAS** providing long-term services and support for vulnerable populations, including home care, public transportation, family caregiving, and expanding community-based services, is essential to ensuring the well-being and dignity of individuals in need of care and assistance,

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the health leadership of the Micronesian region is called upon to acknowledge health as a critical component of economic development and long-term prosperity, requiring a deliberate and integrated approach to development planning that assures the health sector's input, priorities, and needs to operate effectively;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the health leadership of the Micronesian region is called upon to recognize the continuing crisis of NCDs as a critical factor negatively impacting the islands' economic development and to address NCDs and other health issues utilizing a multi-sectoral action planning framework that addresses and integrates both health sector needs and other social and environmental determinants of health. The Regional Health Committee (RHC) urges the implementation of multi-sectoral strategies and interventions to address food insecurity, improve access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene, and enhance living conditions and job security as contributing factors to poor health outcomes.



Social and environmental determinants of health intervention strategies include, but are not limited to the:

- Extension of safe water access and public sewage infrastructure for all communities;
- Expansion of eligibility thresholds for essential social welfare and health programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and federal and state housing subsidies;
- Upscaling efforts for addressing food insecurity through expanded community-based gardening and food production programs and healthy nutrition initiatives in school lunch programs;
- Improving the quality and scope of public education and school-based programs to ensure a healthy, competent, skilled future workforce;
- Establishing and/or expanding access to safe and comprehensive public transportation (sea, air, and land), with a particular focus on supporting the transportation needs of rural, outer-island populations;
- Exploring innovative solutions, such as tax incentives for caregivers, development of assisted living communities, and establishment of dedicated offices to coordinate services for the aging and people with disabilities;
- Establishing and/or expanding job training opportunities and associated programs to link individuals and families to secure adequate sources of income and benefits;
- Investing in safe and adequately built environments to promote healthy living and behaviors, including playgrounds, sidewalks, community centers, sports complexes, etc.; and
- Extending public primary care and other wrap-around social welfare and support services to vulnerable, at-risk communities.

The MIF Leaders task the relevant Micronesian Islands Forum (MIF) regional committee membership to actively support and contribute to national and state development dialogue with respect to their sectors' accountabilities to address the social and environmental determinants of health.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the MIF Leaders support the adoption and investment in the development and expansion of health IT infrastructure, including electronic health records systems, connectivity, and telehealth and telemedicine technology across all health disciplines to improve access to healthcare services, especially in remote areas with limited health services infrastructure. This includes establishing reliable infrastructure to support inter-island and global connectivity and telehealth/telemedicine initiatives, including required and island-appropriate equipment, maintenance support, and training for health professionals and community engagement;



The MIF leaders task the MIF Regional ICT Committee members with actively supporting and integrating health ICT needs into national and state ICT/IT development dialogue and strategic planning.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the MIF Leaders support the implementation of integrated, cross-sectoral strategies and initiatives to build a locally grown and skilled health workforce. These initiatives include investing in local students' educational and health career-track opportunities, offering competitive pay (living wage) and benefits packages for local hires, and providing incentives such as student loan forgiveness and career advancement opportunities.

The MIF Leaders task the MIF Regional Education Committee and Regional Workforce Development Council members to actively support and integrate health education, health career tracks, and health training needs into national and state education development and planning strategies.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the health leadership of the Micronesian region is called upon to task the Regional Workforce Development Committee and the Regional Health Committee, supported by the Micronesia Islands Forum Secretariat, with entering into dialogue on developing a framework for regional "brain-sharing" of limited health specialists, which will include the development of and consensus-building around: 1) regional minimum standards for health specialties and health personnel surge support cross-border licensure mechanisms; and 2) regionally pooled financing mechanism and operational plan to support cross-border deployments. This work will further support the establishment of a regional provider network for veterans' care services, delivery, and support in coordination with the U.S. Veterans Affairs administration. The proposed final draft of this framework should be presented at subsequent MIF meetings for Micronesian leadership review and endorsement.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the MIF Leaders direct the RHC to develop and be accountable for a six-month action plan to follow up on the implementation and progress of this resolution's objectives, including benchmarks and timelines for progress and potential funding sources to support proposed efforts for regional committee engagement and dialogue.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the MIF Secretariat disseminate this resolution to relevant international and regional partners and to communicate with and ensure relevant regional development partners support and engage with proposed resolution efforts, including but not limited to relevant U.S. federal partners, the Pacific Community (SPC), World Health Organization (WHO), relevant United Nations (UN) agencies, USAID, Asian Development Bank (ADB), World Bank (WB), The International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC), etc.



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