NCUIH Urges Administration and Congress to Honor Trust Responsibility in FY26 Budget

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written by Meredith Raimondi | May 5, 2025

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D.C. (May 5, 2025)– On May 2, the President released the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 budget proposal. The FY 2026 proposal serves as a statement of the Administration's policy and funding priorities. The budget acts primarily as a symbolic blueprint of the President's vision for the size and scope of the federal government. The final appropriations will be determined through the Congressional budget process.

The President's funding request overview states that the Administration will "Maintain Support for Tribal Nations", stating, "the Budget preserves Federal funding for the Indian Health Service and supports core programs at the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Bureau of Indian Education, sustaining the Federal Government's support for core programs that benefit tribal communities." It also indicates plans to "streamline other programs for tribal communities, to reduce inefficiencies and eliminate funding for programs and activities found to be ineffective." The proposal for the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) outlines a 26.2% reduction to the overall HHS budget, amounting to $33.3 billion in cuts.

Note: *Detailed agency-level budget requests are expected in the coming weeks. As such, the Indian Health Service (IHS) and Urban Indian Health line items have not yet been released. It is unclear if any programs in the Indian Health Services are proposed for elimination due to "inefficiencies".*

> The CEO of NCUIH, Francys Crevier, J.D. (Algonquin), stated, "The trust responsibility for Native people extends beyond the Indian Health Service. We call on the Administration to honor its commitment to Native people and reconsider all cuts to programs serving Native communities. We further urge the administration to engage in Tribal consultation in recognition of the legal Nation-to-Nation relationship before undergoing any changes impacting Native people. Congress has long demonstrated bipartisan support for Tribal Nations and Native people, and we call upon our Congressional champions to ensure that the Indian Health Service and programs serving Native people receive the necessary resources to fulfill the trust responsibility."

NCUIH has also joined the Coalition for Tribal Sovereignty to ensure that the administration and Congress honor the legal trust responsibility for health care for Native people. We stand with Tribal Nations in protecting all trust responsibilities and the Nation-to-Nation relationship. NCUIH opposes any cuts to programs serving Native communities.

NCUIH's Engagement on FY26

- On February 28, 2025, NCUIH Board President-Elect, Robyn Sunday-Allen, testified at the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, urging full funding for urban Indian health and the Indian Health System. In her testimony, Robyn Sunday-Allen said, "Historically, disruptions in funding to the Indian health system have

resulted in loss of life… Our care is too critical to be paused or reduced." Ensuring mandatory and full funding for the entire Indian Health System—Tribal facilities, IHS, and UIOs—is essential for saving lives.
- NCUIH joined the Coalition for Tribal Sovereignty in a letter to Secretary Kennedy requesting that he appeal the OMB proposed cuts to critical Tribal programming.
- Rep. Leger Fernandez is currently circulating a Dear Colleague letter to the leadership of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, requesting robust funding for Urban Indian Health. The deadline for Congressional members to sign on is May 15.

Next Steps

The administration is expected to release its full Budget in Brief in the coming weeks. In the meantime, the House and Senate Appropriations Committees will craft their respective FY 2026 funding bills. NCUIH will continue to engage with lawmakers to ensure the Indian Health System and all Tribal programs receive the resources they need.

Resources

- Report: Urban Indian Health at Risk – Federal Funding Disruptions Threaten Critical Services (February 12, 2025)
- Resource: The Importance of Urban Indian Health Funding for Urban Native Communities (February 2025)

About NCUIH

The National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) is a national representative for the 41 Urban Indian Organizations contracting with the Indian Health Service under the *Indian Health Care Improvement Act*. NCUIH is devoted to the support and development of high quality and accessible health and public health services for American Indian and Alaska Native people living in urban areas.

NCUIH respects and supports Tribal sovereignty and the unique government-to-government relationship between our Tribal Nations and the United States. NCUIH works to support those federal laws, policies, and procedures that respect and uplift Tribal sovereignty and the government-to-government relationship. NCUIH does not support any federal law, policy, or procedure that infringes upon or in any way diminishes Tribal sovereignty or the government-to-government relationship.

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