NCUIH Honors Senator Tina Smith for Her Leadership and Legacy in Urban Indian Health

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D.C. (May 20, 2026) – The National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) presented the Urban Indian Health Champion Award to Senator Tina Smith (D-MN) during NCUIH's 2026 Annual Conference.

For years, Senator Smith has shown up for urban Indian health in ways that matter. In 2020, she co-introduced the bipartisan ***Coverage for Urban Indian Health Providers Act***, which extended *Federal Tort Claims Act* (FTCA) coverage to Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs), a concrete win for UIOs and the communities they serve. That victory is just one example of the impactful change Senator Smith has worked to deliver for Indian Country.



From Left to Right: Dr. Patrick Rock CEO Indian Health Board of Minneapolis (IHB) (Leech Lake

Band of Ojibwe), Senator Tina Smith, Joni Buffalohead, Chairwoman (Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate), Mike Goze, IHB Board member (Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin)

Year after year, Senator Smith has also led the Senate Dear Colleague letter to the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, which requested the maximum funding for urban Indian health and advance appropriations for the Indian Health Service. It is a consistent, reliable act of leadership that UIOs across the country depend on.

As Senator Smith prepares to conclude her Senate service at the end of her term, this award also celebrates her legacy. Over the course of her tenure, she has helped transform how Congress thinks about urban Indian health. We are deeply grateful for everything she has done for urban Indian communities and honored to recognize her with this award.

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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