



# USET

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## **Testimony for the Record of the United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund for the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs Hearing to “Examine the President’s Budget Requests for the Fiscal Year 2027 for the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Indian Health Service”**

The United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF) is pleased to provide the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs with the following testimony for the record of the May 20, 2026 hearing to “Examine the President’s Budget Requests for the Fiscal Year 2027 for the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Indian Health Service.” We appreciate the Committee’s longstanding commitment to seeking input from Indian Country, which we note is especially critical at this moment in history. As Indian Country funding and Indian Country-serving federal positions continue to be affected in the implementation of the Trump Administration’s policy priorities, we continue to call upon this Committee to exercise its oversight responsibilities and work with the Senate Appropriations Committee to protect trust and treaty obligations.

USET SPF is a non-profit, inter-Tribal organization advocating on behalf of thirty-three (33) federally recognized Tribal Nations from the Northeastern Woodlands to the Everglades and across the Gulf of Turtle Island.<sup>1</sup> USET SPF is dedicated to promoting, protecting, and advancing the inherent sovereign rights and authorities of Tribal Nations and in assisting its membership in dealing effectively with public policy issues.

### **Foundations of Tribal Nations’ Governmental Status and Federal Obligations**

As the Committee is aware, Tribal Nations are and always have been inherently sovereign governments that have strong political relationships with our Tribal citizens and community members. We govern and police our lands, and we provide services aimed at keeping our communities safe and healthy. Tribal Nations also have political, government-to-government relationships with the United States, and we prepaid with our lands and resources for trust and treaty obligations that the United States owes us. The U.S. Constitution singles out Tribal Nations and Native people as unique, and the U.S. Supreme Court has time and again affirmed the principle that United States actions that deliver on trust and treaty obligations to Tribal Nations, Tribal citizens, and Tribal communities do not run afoul of the U.S. Constitution’s equal protection requirements.

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<sup>1</sup> USET SPF member Tribal Nations include: Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas (TX), Catawba Indian Nation (SC), Cayuga Nation (NY), Chickahominy Indian Tribe (VA), Chickahominy Indian Tribe–Eastern Division (VA), Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana (LA), Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana (LA), Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (NC), Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians (ME), Jena Band of Choctaw Indians (LA), Mashantucket Pequot Indian Tribe (CT), Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe (MA), Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida (FL), Mi’kmaq Nation (ME), Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MS), Mohegan Tribe of Indians of Connecticut (CT), Monacan Indian Nation (VA), Nansemond Indian Nation (VA), Narragansett Indian Tribe (RI), Oneida Indian Nation (NY), Pamunkey Indian Tribe (VA), Passamaquoddy Tribe at Indian Township (ME), Passamaquoddy Tribe at Pleasant Point (ME), Penobscot Indian Nation (ME), Poarch Band of Creek Indians (AL), Rappahannock Tribe (VA), Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe (NY), Seminole Tribe of Florida (FL), Seneca Nation of Indians (NY), Shinnecock Indian Nation (NY), Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana (LA), Upper Mattaponi Tribe (VA), and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) (MA).

The United States fulfills its trust and treaty obligations through the direct delivery of Tribal programs and services to Tribal communities and through provision of federal funding to Tribal Nations and Tribal organizations serving Tribal Nations so that we may provide services to our communities in a self-governing manner. Any Tribal program or funding delivered to Tribal Nations and Native people—including through Urban Indian Organizations and Tribal organizations serving Tribal Nations—is provided in furtherance of the United States' trust and treaty obligations. The federal employees necessary for the support of those Tribal programs and the disbursement of those Tribal funds are also part of the trust and treaty obligations. The United States further has a duty to consult government-to-government with Tribal Nations on federal actions that may have Tribal implications, including implications on delivery of trust and treaty obligations. These actions are not discretionary; they are legal obligations rooted in the U.S. Constitution, trust and treaty obligations, and long-standing federal statutes.

### **Administration Actions have Affected the Delivery of Tribal Programs and Funds**

The Administration's indiscriminate implementation of its priorities is exacerbating the chronic underfunding of federal trust and treaty obligations. Indian Country, including the federal employees delivering the services we are owed, is already forced to operate without appropriate resources. The impacts of this failure to deliver upon federal promises are visible throughout Tribal Nations and communities. By nearly every measure and indicator, Tribal Nations and our citizens face a lower quality of life than do others in the United States. Now, the Administration is proposing a vast increase in defense discretionary spending that, without an equal increase in non-defense discretionary spending, would likely result in across-the-board funding cuts to non-defense programs. The continued disruption of what little resources are flowing will only deepen the divide between Indian Country and the rest of America.

As the Committee is well aware, Native people have endured many injustices as a result of federal law and policy, including federal actions that sought to terminate Tribal Nations, assimilate our people, and erode Tribal territories, learning, and cultures. The resources ceded by Tribal Nations, oftentimes by force, are the very foundation of this nation, allowing the U.S. to become the wealthiest and strongest world power in history. Federal funding and services to Tribal Nations and our citizens and communities are simply a repayment on this debt. As such, we must never be forced to shoulder the costs of deficit reduction or asked to accept

Despite legal mandates for the provision of Tribal programs and funding, as well as Tribal consultation requirements, the Administration continues to implement policy priorities without first consulting with and insulating Indian Country from impacts. These ongoing actions have generated real consequences throughout Indian Country. We have also been wrongly caught up in Administration efforts related to diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, as well as those allegedly seeking to weed out fraud, waste, and abuse.

From our perspective, these actions represent a misunderstanding of our unique political status under the law and the United States' legal requirement to deliver on its trust and treaty obligations. Indian Country programs are legally required by trust and treaty obligations and associated implementing statutes. If the Administration were to engage in more thorough and meaningful government-to-government Tribal consultation with us prior to executing on its priorities, we could help the Administration avoid harm to Indian Country, saving time and energy for all.

Tribal Nations, the 119th Congress, and the Trump Administration have important overlapping goals, and we must focus our energies on pursuing those goals together. We share a foundational understanding that

local communities, such as Tribal Nations, are best suited to address our people's needs and keep them safe. We are aligned in the desire for the federal government to remove barriers that prevent Tribal Nations from effectively caring for our people—a fuller recognition of Tribal sovereignty—while remaining committed to delivering the federal resources that Tribal Nations are due. At present, however, our focus continues to be drawn to protecting Indian Country from collateral harm caused by imprecise implementation of Trump Administration priorities.

### **Support Advance, Mandatory, and Full Funding Across All Tribal Programs**

USET SPF continues to express its gratitude for the historic achievement of advance appropriations for the Indian Health Service (IHS). Thanks to advance appropriations, the agency's clinical services have experienced budgetary certainty in the face of the recent 45-day government shutdown. It is our expectation that the Members of the Committee will continue to support this practice for IHS and work with your colleagues to expand this mechanism to all Tribal offices, programs, and funding throughout the federal government. Toward this goal, USET SPF lends its unequivocal support to legislation that would put an end to the instability of Continuing Resolutions and shutdowns for all federal Indian agencies, programs, and funding. This includes strong support for advance appropriations authority for both IHS and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). USET SPF strongly supports S. 2771, the Indian Programs Advance Appropriations Act (IPAAA), which would enshrine in statute advance appropriations for IHS, BIA, and BIE. Passage of this legislation, and the certainty it would bring, is long overdue. Additionally, payments on debt to Indian Country should not be vulnerable to annual "discretionary" decisions by appropriators and should not require annual advocacy by Indian Country. Notably, in October 2025, [Brookings](#) issued a report calling for advance appropriations in the short-term and mandatory funding in the long-term for Tribal-serving agencies and programs.

We support the development and implementation of a legislative proposal to meaningfully increase and shift funding for IHS to the mandatory side of the budget. We also urge Congress to immediately shift funding for Contract Support Costs (CSC) and 105(I) leases at IHS, BIA, and BIE to mandatory. While we contend that all Tribal offices, programs, and funding throughout the federal government should be subject to mandatory funding, we continue to support the immediate transfer of these lines to ensure that funding increases are able to be allocated to service delivery, as opposed to the federal government's legal obligations regarding CSC and 105(I).

USET SPF firmly believes that all Indian Country funding lines should be fully funded today, though we acknowledge that a more detailed plan that ramps up over time to reach the full funding figure may be necessary. We strongly encourage Congress and the Administration to work in close consultation with Tribal Nations, and for IHS to employ the IHS Sub-Workgroup on Mandatory Funding, to identify a full funding figure that is representative of the full scope of the Indian Health System.

### **Concern Regarding Proposed Change to Tribal Agreements Under ISDEAA in the President's FY 2027 Budget Request**

USET SPF is aware of a concerning provision that was included in the [FY 2027 Budget Request for the Department of the Interior](#). Specifically, Sec. 430 of the General Provisions language of the request includes a proposed change to Tribal Agreements under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA) that would essentially eliminate the declination and final offer processes in Titles I and IV (and possibly IV) under ISDEAA. The proposed language in the FY 2027 Budget Request reads as follows:

**“Sec. 430.** Notwithstanding sections 106(b)(2) and 516(a) of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5325(b)(2), 5396(a)), the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Secretary of the Interior may reduce the amount of funds provided under the terms of a self-determination contract or compact entered into under that Act if—(1) the approval of an increase to the amount of funds that would otherwise be required under the terms of such contract or compact was made pursuant to section 507(b) of that Act (25 U.S.C. 5387(b)) or section 900.18 or 1000.179 of title 25, Code of Federal Regulations; and (2) the amount of the reduction does not exceed the amount of the increase.”

The referenced provisions at Section 507(b) (25 U.S.C. 5387(b)) and 25 C.F.R. 900.18 provide (for Titles V and I) that where the agency fails to respond to a Tribal Nation’s proposal for the terms of a contract, compact, or associated funding agreement the proposal will be deemed to have been accepted by the agency. We note that the citation to 25 C.F.R. 1000.179 refers to a similar provision, which no longer exists, in the Department of the Interior (DOI) regulations governing Title IV since those regulations were revised and became effective in 2025 ([89 FR 100245, Dec. 11, 2024](#)). Along with other standards under the ISDEAA identifying (and constraining) the lawful grounds for rejecting a Tribal proposal, these provisions ensure that the agencies are held accountable for timely response to Tribal proposals and providing sufficient legal justification for any decision to reject or deny those proposals.

USET SPF asserts that if this provision were enacted, it would allow the IHS or BIA to not agree to any additional funding amounts requested by Tribal Nations. This would amend ISDEAA so that if a Tribal Nation submits a proposal to the IHS or BIA that requests additional funding, and the agency chooses not to respond to the request under the deadlines imposed by ISDEAA, then the proposal would still be approved. However, the IHS or BIA would then be able to reduce the amount of funding in the contract or compact by an amount equal to the additional funding amount requested.

We note that federal agencies have consistently resisted the ISDEAA’s requirement to transfer funding and programmatic decision-making authority to Tribal Nations. There are numerous examples throughout the existence of ISDEAA where federal agencies have exercised an unwillingness to implement the directives of the legislation. The Title I proposal process and Title IV and V final offer provisions are examples of the kinds of mechanisms that Congress has determined are necessary to ensuring agency accountability and faithful implementation of the law. The President’s FY2027 Budget Request would essentially eliminate these critical provisions with respect to Tribal funding proposals by permitting the agencies to remove any funding amounts added to a contract or compact as a result of deemed acceptance. This would permit the agencies to get around Congress’s sensibly crafted proposal and final offer procedures by ignoring Tribal funding proposals, failing to respond, and then zeroing out any funds that would otherwise have been awarded to the Tribal Nation by failing to respond. It would further leave Tribal Nations without any effective mechanism for forcing the agencies to defend the legality of their funding decisions, subjecting those decisions to agency bureaucrats.

Due to these concerns, USET SPF urges the Members of the Committee to work with their colleagues in Congress to ensure that this concerning provision is not included in any final appropriations language, and, if it is, then it must swiftly be removed from the bill. In exercising oversight over BIA and IHS, the Committee must direct these agencies to engage in prior and informed consultation activities when developing and proposing policy or programmatic changes that may impact the delivery of funds and services to Tribal Nations, which did not occur prior to proposing this change to ISDEAA in the President’s FY 2027 Budget Request.

### **Specific Recommendations for the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget for the BIA and BIE**

USET SPF expresses its continued concern regarding the deep cuts proposed for Indian Affairs at the DOI. As with FY 2026, we urge the Members of the Committee to work with their colleagues to avoid enacting this proposal. We also remain focused on the addition of a component in the yearly budget formulation process outlining BIA's unfunded obligations to Indian Country. In addition, we offer the BIA Eastern Region's top funding priorities in eight different strategic funding categories:

- Strengthening Tribal Communities: Aid to Tribal Government (TPA)
  - Trust-Natural Resources Management: Natural Resources (TPA)
  - Trust-Land & Water Rights Management: Land Acquisition
  - Public Safety & Justice: Tribal Courts (TPA)
  - Economic Development: Economic Development (TPA)
  - Education: BIE Scholarships & Adult Education (TPA)
  - Construction: Water Safety and Sanitation
  - Resource Management Construction: Dam Safety
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- **Funding for Newly Recognized Tribal Nations.** Recognizing the severe underfunding of trust and treaty obligations, federal recognition must necessarily include a prompt increase in Administratively proposed and Congressionally appropriated funding to ensure that current federally recognized Tribal Nations are held harmless from budget shortfalls. This must also ensure that newly recognized Tribal Nations are able to access the resources they are owed.
  - **Payments in Lieu of Taxes.** Since 1977, DOI has issued billions in payment in lieu of taxes (PILT) to local governments that help offset losses in property taxes due to the existence of nontaxable federal lands within their boundaries. However, while PILT payments are made for lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Forest Service (part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture) and for federal water projects and some military installations, lands held in trust for Tribal Nations are not currently eligible. USET SPF believes that PILT (or a PILT-like mechanism) for lands put into trust could remove barriers to the restoration of Tribal homelands while also easing the perceived burdens of and impacts to local government as a result of lost tax revenue. USET SPF remains focused on this issue as a top priority and reiterates a funding request for PILT.
  - **Funding for Tribal Historic Preservation.** Due to chronic underfunding, many Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs) are currently operating without the necessary personnel to conduct National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 and other cultural reviews. We urge the Members of this Committee to work with their colleagues to provide increased resources for THPOs, so that we may protect our cultural and sacred sites, as well as build capacity to participate thoroughly in infrastructure review and permitting processes.
  - **P.L. 477 Program Implementation Concerns.** We are currently concerned about DOI's seeming misinterpretation of its authority and responsibility to make the final determination as to whether programs are eligible for inclusion in a Tribal Nation's 477 plan. We also worry that DOI and other agencies are not viewing 477 as a holistic self-sufficiency program. We request that the Members of the Committee support appropriations report language to provide clarification to DOI and other agencies.

- **DOI Tribal Resiliency Continuity Program.** Due to the structural barriers limiting our access to the Department of Homeland Security's, Homeland Security Grant Program, we strongly urge Congress to appropriate \$207 million to establish a [Tribal Resiliency Continuity Program](#) at DOI to build and supplement core emergency management, homeland security, and emergency services capabilities.
- **Preserve the Tribal Interior Budget Council (TIBC) and Other Federal Advisory Committees.** USET SPF is concerned by recent suggestions from the Administration that Tribal Advisory Committees across the federal government are duplicative or unnecessary. DOI, for example, is currently reconsidering the composition and scope of TIBC. USET SPF strongly supports the preservation and improvement of TIBC as one of many critical advisory committees. We also strongly support the preservation of other Tribal advisory entities, such as the DOI Secretary's Tribal Advisory Committee (STAC), across the federal government and remind DOI that these entities are not "duplicative" advisory bodies. Rather, each has critical functions in upholding trust and treaty obligations, improving Tribal-federal relations, and supporting Tribal sovereignty and self-determination.
- **The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Must Produce a Detailed Crosscut for TIBC.** OMB asserts that over \$30 billion in federal dollars is appropriated to Indian Country annually. From the perspective of Tribal advocates, including those who serve on budget formulation committees for federal agencies, this number seems to be widely inflated, with far less actually reaching Tribal Nations and Tribal citizens. We suspect that OMB arrives at this figure by tallying the amount for which Tribal Nations and entities are eligible, regardless of whether these dollars actually reach Indian Country. While OMB has provided a high-level crosscut of this funding in the past, both USET SPF and the TIBC have asked for a full, detailed accounting of federal funding distributed to Indian Country. This should include details such as how many Tribal Nations accessed funding under each line, how the funding was delivered, and whether the funds were accessed directly through the federal government or through states. While OMB has historically worked to refine its Native American Crosscut, we have not yet seen the level of detail we are seeking. USET SPF firmly believes that this information is absolutely essential to consultation around federal budget formulation, as well as the measurement of DOI's own success in meeting its obligations and the work of Tribal Nations.

### **Specific Recommendations for the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget for the IHS**

In addition to supporting full and mandatory funding for IHS, Nashville Area Tribal Nations identified the following top five priority line items for increases:

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| 1. <b>Hospitals &amp; Health Clinics</b> | 4. <b>Dental Health</b>               |
| 2. <b>Purchase/Referred Care</b>         | 5. <b>Alcohol and Substance Abuse</b> |
| 3. <b>Mental Health</b>                  |                                       |

Nashville Area priorities also include: funding for Facilities Construction and for Facilities and Environmental Health; increases for Urban Indian Health programs and telehealth resources; recurring funding for Public Health Education; funding for substance use disorder aftercare and housing programs;

funding to reduce Hepatitis C; continued funding for Community Health Representatives; parity in group payor authorities when sponsoring patients on insurance plans and high pharmaceutical costs; and increased support for provider/staffing recruitment and retention.

USET SPF supports several aspects of the FY 2027 Budget Request for the IHS that we urge Congress to adopt. As previously mentioned, we strongly support the inclusion of advance appropriations for the IHS in FY 2027, and we are hopeful the Committee and Congress will continue to support this vital policy this year and into the future. In addition, we support the Administration's recommendation to increase funding for the IHS PATH Electronic Health Record (EHR) system modernization by \$96 million. Following multiple funding cuts, the program's continuation and future success have been under threat. The existing IHS EHR, the Resource and Patient Management System (RPMS), is so aged and outdated that IHS has estimated it will only be operational for a few more years. If the new PATH system is not completed and implemented by the time RPMS becomes inoperable, operations and the delivery of healthcare across the IHS will be threatened. We strongly urge Congress to increase funding for the IHS EHR modernization program by at least the \$96 million proposed in the FY 2027 Budget Request. USET SPF also supports the recommendation to increase funding for Current Services, although we request Congress provide a more robust increase for this line item to ensure that appropriations are adequately accounting for inflation and cost increases that continue to strain IHS and Tribal health resources.

However, while we support these budgetary proposals, USET SPF is concerned by other proposals in the Budget Request. For example, the President's Budget Request is silent on whether it supports the continuation of the Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI). The IHS CJ lists only the amount of funding currently authorized by Congress through the end of calendar year 2026 and does not include a reauthorization request. Many in Indian Country have interpreted this as a proposed cut to the SDPI. While we acknowledge that the Administration clarified that this is not the case, we requested the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) provide an update to Tribal Nations regarding its intentions for the SDPI in FY 2027. USET SPF hopes this Committee and Congress will continue to protect and support the SDPI in FY 2027. Additionally, we urge Congress to implement Tribal Nations' authority to receive SDPI funds through self-determination and self-governance contracts and compacts. Currently, program dollars are delivered through grant mechanisms which fail to honor the federal trust obligation by treating Tribal Nations as grantees rather than sovereign governments. With the authority to receive SDPI funds directly through Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA) contracts and compacts, Tribal Nations will be able to use SDPI dollars more efficiently as less staff time will be needed to complete grant-related tasks and can be dedicated to program delivery.

USET SPF is also concerned by the proposal to drastically reduce funding for the Sanitation Facilities Construction (SFC) account by nearly \$94 million, or 87%, despite persistent sanitation facility backlogs and the importance of sanitation systems to Tribal public health. These proposed funding cuts would violate the federal government's trust and treaty obligations to provide for Tribal healthcare and have the potential to severely disrupt existing programs and services in Indian Country. In addition, this decrease effectively offsets the proposed increase for EHR modernization. While we strongly support increased funding for EHR modernization, that increase cannot come at the cost of other vital programs and services at IHS. USET SPF requests Congress acknowledge the importance of both EHR modernization and Sanitation Facilities Construction by providing increases for both line items, rather than sacrificing one priority to bolster another.

Finally, USET SPF recommends the Committee exercise its oversight authorities to ensure that reorganization efforts at IHS reflect Tribal priorities. USET SPF agrees that there are persistent operational issues affecting delivery of care and administration of services across IHS, but the solutions to these issues must be reflective of and guided by Tribal priorities, uphold federal trust and treaty obligations, and be mutually agreed upon through meaningful Tribal consultation. This will require IHS to share additional, more specific information regarding the realignment plan prior to implementation to ensure that the practical application of these proposals does not inadvertently create unfavorable consequences for Tribal Nations and so that we may provide meaningful feedback.

We acknowledge that IHS has indicated that some proposals presented during the most recent round of consultation have already been amended following comments received during consultation, but we remain concerned by certain proposals as we understood them at the time. The initial realignment plan proposes to change the Area Office structure, including proposals that would centralize many functions currently performed by the Area Offices and strip them of decision-making authority. While USET SPF agrees that steps could be taken to improve Area Office performance across the IHS system, current proposals that seem to call for a transition of Area Offices into mere liaising entities and shift ISDEAA negotiations to Headquarters may have unintended consequences on service delivery, technical assistance and the ability to tailor solutions to unique Tribal circumstances. Further, IHS has not provided specific information on how the Area Offices would be structured and staffed, which makes it difficult for Tribal Nations to provide meaningful feedback. USET SPF has consistently advocated for a strong Area Office presence and for services to be administered at the Area level in response to previous proposals to reduce or eliminate IHS presence in our Area. Centralizing or devolving functions away from our Area office has resulted in our Area receiving inadequate services. With this in mind, we worry that, in the absence of a more specific and considered proposal, final realignment decisions may not align with Tribal priorities for the Area Offices and/or reduce the level or types of service we currently receive at the Area level.

USET SPF is also concerned with proposals to restructure the ISDEAA negotiation process at IHS. Thus far, the information provided by IHS on this change is unclear and we fear it may not fully represent the changes that would happen as a result of realignment. IHS must provide additional details, including on how Agency Lead Negotiators (ALNs) will function and where they will work, the decision-making and oversight processes, and how Tribal Nations can expect to interact with the new structure. In the absence of detailed proposals explaining how these changes will be practically implemented, we worry that IHS's interpretation and perceived impact of negotiation activities remaining "at the Area level" may be different than Tribal Nations'.

Agency realignment is a major undertaking that will shape the IHS for years to come. It is therefore essential for IHS to ensure the realignment plan has been shaped by robust Tribal consultation, is reflective of Tribal priorities, and has been fully vetted for potential impacts to service and program delivery. USET SPF strongly urged IHS to release additional details and conduct further Tribal consultation on how the proposed realignment actions would work on a practical level, particularly how positions would work at the Area level, where decision-making authorities will be held, and how self-governance negotiation activities would change under realignment. We respectfully request the Committee support USET SPF and others across in Indian Country in our request for the IHS to provide additional information and Tribal consultation on any realignment plans. USET SPF hopes that together, Tribal Nations, IHS, Congress, and the Administration can develop and implement a realignment strategy, guided by Tribal consultation, that meets the priorities of Indian Country and creates a better system for healthcare delivery.

**Expansion of Self-Governance Authority.** USET SPF also continues to urge the HHS and Congress to pursue self-governance expansion across HHS programs, both as an avenue for pursuing improvements in Tribal health and wellness and as a fuller recognition of Tribal Nations' inherent sovereignty. We share the Administration's understanding that local communities, such as Tribal Nations, are best suited to address their people's needs and keep them safe. We are aligned in the desire for the federal government to remove barriers that prevent Tribal Nations from effectively caring for our people. Self-governance expansion in HHS programs would support these shared goals. Tribal Nations have proven over decades that we are capable of operating complex health systems and have used our existing self-governance authorities to make measurable improvements in our communities' health. We urge Congress to work alongside Tribal Nations to enact any necessary statutory authorities to expand self-governance.

**Other Selected Lines and Programs.** Though not an exhaustive list, USET SPF strongly supports increases for the following lines and programs: Good Health and Wellness in Indian Country (CDC); Rural Community Facilities (ACF); Tribal Opioid Response Grants (SAMHSA); Community Development Financial Institutions Fund grants; the Indian Community Development Block Grant; USDA Rural Business Development grants; EPA state and Tribal assistance grants; BIA Tribal Community Resilience; the Crime Victims Fund Tribal set aside; and Native American Housing Block Grants.

### **Conclusion**

USET SPF urges the Committee and Congress to act swiftly to ensure that Tribal programs—and programs that Tribal Nations are eligible for—are not eliminated by the President's FY 2027 budget requests for DOI and HHS. It is critical that the federal government deliver upon its trust and treaty obligations by ensuring that these programs continue to receive the necessary and required appropriations to deliver on these obligations. We also ask that this body do more to protect the execution of trust and treaty obligations from the damaging effects of volatility in federal policy. One way to do this is to ensure we are insulated from continuing resolutions and government shutdowns. In the long-term, and in pursuit of a relationship more reflective of this obligation, USET SPF urges this Committee, Congress, and all branches of the federal government to ensure that full and mandatory funding for trust and treaty obligations is realized in our lifetimes. USET SPF thanks the Committee for the opportunity to provide testimony for the record and looks forward to continued dialogue and collaboration to protect Tribal programs and services by realizing advance, mandatory, and full funding across the board.