

**TESTIMONY CONCERNING FISCAL YEAR 2027
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR,
ENVIRONMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES**

**COEUR D'ALENE TRIBE
CHIEF J. ALLAN, CHAIRMAN**

March 17, 2025

Chairman Simpson, Ranking Member Pingree, and respected members of the Committee, I am Chief Allan, the Chairman of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe (Tribe) in Idaho. We submit this testimony to urge Congress to increase, or, at the very least preserve and protect, federal funding levels for Indian programs.

On behalf of the Tribe, I would like to thank you for inviting me to testify. I would also like to commend this subcommittee, and each of you, for the efforts you take and have taken to improve the lives of Native people in this great Nation. As Congress knows, Indian tribes have a unique political and legal status recognized by the U.S. Constitution. Elimination or disruption of federal funding for Indian tribes has a huge impact on the ability of tribes to provide essential services to their members. We appreciate your dedication to ensuring that the federal funding relied upon by tribes not only continues but continues without interruption.

BIA: Natural Resources. There is nothing more important than preserving and protecting the land and resources that our ancestors secured for our people. The Tribe is committed to the management, conservation, and sustainability of the natural resources of the Coeur d'Alene Reservation. We urge you to provide full funding for Natural Resources Management in FY 2027.

Our Reservation consists of 345,000 acres that must be managed and protected for the current and future generations. The challenges to our natural resources across the region are diverse and complex given our unique landscape and the impacts from government policies like allotment. The Reservation spans the western edge of the northern Rocky Mountains and the Palouse and has varied terrain that includes mountains, lakes, timber, and farmlands. The stewardship of those natural resources—through scientific study, resource management, and enforcement of tribal laws that regulate tribal members who hunt, fish, and gather—is critical, and is also an important source of local employment.

Given the size of our Reservation, enforcement issues related to the protection of our tribal natural resources are an important and often overlooked area. We need increased funding to recruit, train, and employ tribal fish and game law enforcement officers. Additionally, invasive species threaten all natural resources within the

Reservation. They can inhibit cultural, agricultural, recreational, and ecological use of the land. To protect our resources, the Tribe needs federal funding for the prevention, control, education, and monitoring of invasive species. We request Congress continue to support funding in this area.

Finally, we need Congress to increase funding to support community resilience strategies to address the increasing impacts of wind storms and extended droughts. These events place substantial financial and ecological strain on our communities.

BIA: Public Safety and Justice. A significant part of protecting our Reservation is having a fully staffed and trained law enforcement department. We appreciate Congress's decision to increase funding for BIA's Public Safety and Justice, including funding to solve Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) cold cases. Although we address law enforcement needs through a combination of tribal and available federal funds, more funding is needed for law enforcement personnel, administrative assistance, and supplies.

Funding is also needed for training. Due to increases in the drug epidemic and related crimes, our officers need access to vital training, including for dealing with an increase in people with mental health issues. Within our Reservation we have consistently seen an increase in heroin and fentanyl overdoses, including fatal overdoses.

We have a regular need to replace equipment, including both marked and unmarked squad vehicles for narcotic investigations. And with the evolving trends in drugs/illegal substances and human trafficking, including MMIW, our law enforcement has experienced an increase in services and equipment needs.

Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). The Tribe asks Congress to continue to support funding Indian education programs provided by the BIE. The Tribe operates an Early Childhood Learning Center with assistance from federal funding, provides curriculum resources for elementary school children through a four-year State-Tribal Education Partnership Program federal grant, and provides resources to improve the successes of middle and high school students through a four-year federal grant from the Department of Education (DOE). However, like all tribes, we need more academic support for students. We therefore also urge Congress to significantly increase federal funding for Indian education and to ensure that the funding reaches tribes, with tribes deciding how best to use that funding.

Additionally, with Office of Indian Education (OIE) functions at DOE being consolidated and integrated into the Department of the Interior, we are concerned about the continuation of OIE funds. We request that Congress include language in the 2027 budget that guarantees that OIE funding moves alongside and with OIE functions.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). We appreciate Congress's continued support to provide federal funds for EPA, but we ask that funding for EPA in FY 2027 be increased.

State and Tribal Assistances Grants (STAG). We thank Congress for continuing to support funding for STAG, including increasing funding for Sections 106 and 319 implementation, as well as our Brownfields Tribal Response Program. These programs have not seen any substantive increases in years, yet the Tribe's responsibilities continue to grow and face increasing pressures and obstacles.

Indian Environmental General Assistance Program (GAP). GAP funding provides the core allocation for our environmental programs that provide for the development and implementation of solid and hazardous waste programs. This funding has not significantly increased in 25 years, despite the need to address both increasing population pressures on our solid waste systems and emerging contaminants of concern that present threats to our community health. We request that GAP funding be increased.

Water Quality. The Tribe has a federally-approved water quality standards program that regulates water quality for navigable waters within the Reservation. We urge that Tribal Section 106 funding be doubled so that we can do the work needed to protect our waters. Additionally, Congress should provide additional funding to support tribal expansion of authorities under the Clean Water Act to ensure that tribes, at the local level, can protect their water resources.

Air. The Tribe has partial Treatment as a State for smoke management, and has maintained its long-standing air monitoring program since 1996. We are very appreciative of Congress providing a funding increase for Clean Air Act section 105 funding. With this increase, we were able to keep up with rising costs from inflation. We urge Congress to continue increasing funding for this program to keep pace with inflation.

Indian Health Service (IHS). We appreciate Congress's continued support to increase and advance funding for IHS. However, we urge Congress to provide full funding. At the very least, we ask that Congress ensure that all IHS appropriations are indexed to keep pace with inflation.

In 1990, the Tribe chartered the Benewah Health Authority (Authority) and compacted with IHS to open the first joint IHS and Federally Qualified Community Health Center in the United States. The Authority pursued funds from a variety of sources to build the facilities and to fund operations to improve healthcare delivery on the Reservation. Waiting for IHS to provide funding was not an option because of the significant delays at the time, which continue today, in implementing its priority list for facility construction. In 2017, the Authority changed its name to Marimn Health,

a Coeur d'Alene Tribal word that means "medicine." Over the last 30 years, since we took over, our facility has grown and is a success story not only for our tribal members but also for our entire rural Reservation community. Federal funding was critical to these successes and remains critical to our mission and ability to function on a daily basis.

We continue to support and thank Congress for providing advance appropriations for IHS and request this be continued. We also believe that tribal health and other programs should be permanently excluded from sequestration and rescissions. IHS is the only federal health care system created as the result of treaty obligations, yet it is the most chronically underfunded.

We support the preservation of Medicaid, as well as the continuation of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act and other Indian-specific provisions in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

We support making both Contract Support Costs and the 105(l) leasing funding mandatory every year. This is important because this funding, which is a non-discretionary funding obligation for the agency, competes with discretionary funding. We also support permanent reauthorization of the Special Diabetes Program for Indians (SDPI) and that it be funded at \$250 million per year indexed for inflation. Tribes and tribal organizations should also be authorized to receive SDPI awards through P.L. 93-638 contracts or compacts.

Congress has recognized the lack of infrastructure funding and support for tribes. The Coeur d'Alene Tribe is no different from other tribes and suffers from the lack of adequate and viable funding for infrastructure needs. Roads, water and sewer systems, housing, bridges, and other projects throughout the Reservation need to be updated, improved, expanded, or constructed to provide basic living accommodations for our tribal members. To address this need, we support an increase of \$627.5 million as well as recurring funding to support Public Health Infrastructure. Congress should also provide that tribes have flexibility in how they use that funding to meet their needs.

Lim Lemtsh. Thank you.