

Written Testimony of

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CROW CREEK SIOUX TRIBE, HUNKPATI SIOUX RESERVATION
HOUSE COMMITTEE O APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR,
ENVIRONMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES
“2027 APPROPRIATIONS TESTIMONY”**

March 17th, 2026

On behalf of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe “*Hunkpati Dakota /Nakota Oyate*”, I am pleased to submit this written testimony on our funding priorities and request for fiscal year 2027 Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Indian Health Service (IHS) and related Interior agencies budgets.

I share a remarkable kinship with tribal leaders past and present throughout Indian country in that I am a veteran, serving in the United States Marine Corps 1991-1998. Today my service to America and Indian country continues as I work to strengthen the government-to-government relationship between the United States and Tribal Nations. My testimony reflects the citizens of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe and our desire for self-reliance, self-determination and opportunities for the federal government to better uphold its sacred Trust and Treaty obligations. The Crow Creek Sioux Tribe is a Direct Service Tribe, meaning many of the programs and services our citizens rely on are delivered directly by federal agencies, particularly the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Indian Health Service. Because of this structure, the federal government’s capacity to deliver services through adequate funding, staffing, and program support has a direct impact on measurable Trust standards.

As we seek to identify opportunities that support our goal of self-reliance, we ask the committee to acknowledge the barriers that continue to undermine meaningful self-determination. The failure to ensure Tribal governmental parity with state and local governments, the failure to adequately fund mandatory Trust obligations, the chronic failure to distribute essential funding on time, are among the many factors that contribute to the overwhelming unmet needs confronting the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe.

Provide \$2.9 billion to BIA’s Public Safety and Justice Account including a \$3 million increase for the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe.

- **Provide \$1 million support for predevelopment Detention Facility Transition**
- **Provide \$2 million Infrastructure Public Safety Housing Federal Employees**

The Crow Creek Sioux Tribe requests \$1 million in FY27 to support predevelopment necessary to repurpose the abandoned BIA jail Facility/ Building into a working Tribal detention facility through ISDEAA Section 105 Lease program.

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As we transition from a Direct Service Tribe to a Tribe that takes on some federal functions, it is imperative that our partners in the federal government invest in our self-reliance. We have identified this facility as a launch initiative and a valuable opportunity.

The Crow Creek Sioux Tribe requests \$2 million in infrastructure for Housing Development for Federal Employees. BIA housing is antiquated and inadequate to support a federal workforce severely impeding quality of life for Federal Employees and recruitment of quality employees.

Provide no less than \$100 million for BIA Tribal Social Services, including \$1 million to the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe to expand family support programming focused on prevention and early intervention services.

- **\$1 million to expand Tribal Social Services**

The Crow Creek Sioux Tribe requests \$1 million in FY27 to support an increase in FTE and programmatic services that support prevention and early intervention efforts. These funds would support culturally responsive programming designed to strengthen families and prevent crises before they escalate into child welfare involvement, justice system contact, or other negative outcomes. Funding would support family stabilization services, youth and parent support programming, culturally grounded prevention initiatives, and coordinated intervention services for families experiencing hardship.

Mandatory Appropriations for Section 105(I) Leases and Contract Support Costs

Reclassify Discretionary spending for Section 105(I) Leases and Contract Support Costs to mandatory – Funding for 105 (I) leases and Contract Support Costs must be reclassified as mandatory funding obligations because they are legally required payments to Tribes under the ISDEAA. Despite legal requirements to fully fund CSC and 105(I) lease costs, they remain subject to discretionary appropriations, creating uncertainty and ultimately shortfalls in funding of other essential services. For tribes like Crow Creek who have not benefited yet from Section 105(I) we suffer from unintended consequences of critical Tribal programs being cut. The recent Supreme Court ruling in *Beccera v. San Carlos* and *Beccera v. Northern Arapaho Tribe* reaffirmed that CSC obligations must be fully funded. Separate and infinite accounts established to support Section 105(I) Leases need to be reclassified as mandatory to eliminate uncertainty and protect requisite funding for Trust and Treaty obligations. We do not believe the Congressional intent in supporting Section 105(I) Leases was intended at the expense of vital Tribal programs and services.

Increase Funding for Tribal Base Budgets

Tribal Priority Allocations (TPA) and Recurring Programs are consistently identified as funding priorities by the Tribal Interior Budget Council (TIBC) because they provide core funding that supports crucial tribal government programs and services. The shift among agencies to fund Tribal government programs and services with “grant” dollars often competitive grants rather than providing base annual funding has hurt the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe. Funding through

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competitive grant cycles is antithetical with Trust and Treaty obligations. These reward endowed Tribes (however small) who can fund planning departments/grant writers, data collection and punishes tribes who are forced to retain consultants and grant writers to compete for funding that is a Trust and Treaty obligation. Grant funding should only be used to augment, not supplant Tribal Base Dollars.

Proposed Report Language / Direct Service Tribes and Federal Capacity

“The Committee has received from all corners of Indian country testimony expressing crucial concern over Trust and Treaty obligations being compromised by staff reductions in the Indian Service. The committee shares these concerns. The Committee directs the Indian Service to issue a report to this Committee 90 days of this bill being signed documenting staffing levels since FY24, Titles, Positions, responsibilities of departed employees accounting for DRP engagement and RIFs. The Committee directs the Indian Service to provide the Committee with a corresponding brief as to the Indian Service capacity and requisite staffing levels to meet Treaty and Trust obligations to Direct Service Tribes in particular. The Committee directs the Indian Service to provide quarterly updates as to the impacts of staff reductions, loss of institutional knowledge, and elevation of current staffing levels. The Committee is concerned that staff reductions have compromised the Indian Service capacity to meet Treaty and Trust obligations effectively redefining the federal governments’ Treaty and Trust corpus.”

Proposed Report Language Tribal Consultations

Tribal leaders have spent considerable time and valuable resources attending and participating in numerous Tribal consultations. Our work in engaging in government-to-government consultation/dialogue over policy decisions that affect our daily lives has been impeded through a lack of information, lack of proper timely notice, control over topic areas, venues, formats, and time allotted. The administration has failed in every respect to engage Tribal nations with a clear and consistent consultation policy. Meaningful input with federal partners is untenable under the current standard of Tribal consultation. We propose the following Report Language.

“The Committee encourages the Secretary to engage in Tribal consultation over a clear consultation policy and protocol”. The Committee is concerned that Tribal nations are not equipped with the appropriate information and time to engage in meaningful government to government consultation. The Committee is concerned that there is an inconsistent record and report out of consultation proceedings. The Committee directs the Indian service to publish the record of Tribal consultations in a timely manner.”

Indian Education Increase Investment in Tribal Schools to \$1.5 Billion

- **\$500 million for Construction, Maintenance, Repair and Planning**
- **\$10 Million BIE Immersion**

All of the 183 schools in the BIE system need professional housing, including Crow Creek. Our school serves over 600 students with 90% qualifying for Title I programs. Creating a livable

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community with quality housing stock for educators who serve the poorest students in America is a priority of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe. We are concerned that the social and human needs of our students are being met through piece meal programmatic engagement without a longitudinal plan or coherent implementation. The Committee is aware of the disproportionate mental health challenges, food security, exposure to violence and other indicators of barriers to positive youth development that exist on Crow Creek and other tribal communities. We recommend a Demonstration Project through the BIE that can better organize existing services and mobilize mental health access using online technology transporting high quality care to rural communities such as ours.

We urge the Committee to direct BIE to continue the Native Language Immersion initiative and elevate the investment so that more BIE schools can participate.

Indian Health Service (IHS) Mandatory and Forward Funding

The Crow Creek Sioux Tribe urges Congress to move toward mandatory, forward funding for the Indian Health Service. The federal government's obligation to provide health care to the Tribal Nations arises from the treaty trust responsibility. However, Indian Health Service remains funded through annual discretionary appropriations, creating uncertainty that disrupts workforce recruitment and retention, facility planning, and long-term health stability. Mandatory funding would allow Tribal health systems to plan and operate with greater certainty and stability.

Land Water Conservation Fund \$100 million Tribal Allocation

The LWCF/ GAOA provides Indian country unique opportunities to build schools, engage in conservation, protect sacred sites and participate in Public, Private Tribal partnerships that protect critical habitat.

Tribes for decades were unable to access this program but have recently engaged in a variety of projects. While nearly all the grants supporting Tribal projects have been reservation based, the statute can be used for off reservation initiatives. The Crow Creek Tribe has sensitive burial grounds, culturally significant sites, and sacred sites that are located outside the boundaries of our reservation. We have private landowners within the exterior boundaries of our reservation that we would like to partner with, and this program provides important incentives. Just as Interior has provided some opportunities for co-management and co-stewardship of federal lands/National Parks the LWCF creates unprecedented opportunity for the Federal government to facilitate Public, Private Tribal partnerships that serve the interest of all parties and advance conservation that is purposeful.

Conclusion

On behalf of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, we thank the Committee for protecting full funding of Tribal programs and protecting treaty and trust obligations to Tribal Nations. We look forward to working with the Committee.