

**TESTIMONY CONCERNING FISCAL YEAR 2026  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON  
APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR,  
ENVIRONMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES**

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

**February 25, 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 and 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 fighting to ensure 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 2026.

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 landscape and 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 an important source of local employment.

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

The Tribe receives minimal to no funding each year for water rights negotiation and litigation. However, the Tribe has been forced to actively engage in litigation and settlement negotiations with the State and others resulting from a general stream adjudication initiated in the State. The Tribe has not been able to secure sufficient funds from BIA's water rights and negotiation program because the program is significantly underfunded and tribes have to compete against one another for limited funds. We respectfully request that Congress provide increased funding for BIA's water rights and litigation program.

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.

**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 drug/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 and the Department of Education (DOE). 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. 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 ensure that the funding reaches tribes, with tribes deciding how best to use that

funding.

**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 2026 be increased.

**State and Tribal Assurances Grants (STAG).** We thank Congress for continuing to support funding for STAG, including increasing funding for Sections 106 and 319 funding, 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 both address 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 to regulate 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. Despite wildfire-related smoke resulting in increasingly lengthy degraded air quality, the Tribe's federal funding for its Air Quality program has not kept pace with inflation, resulting in a net decrease in funding that scarcely supports a position for monitoring and inspection. We request that air quality program funding for tribes be increased.

**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 the delivery of healthcare delivery on the Reservation. Waiting for the 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, after we took over, our facility has grown and is a success story not only for our tribal members but 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 (IHCIA) 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 others 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—and Congress should provide that tribes have flexibility in how they use that funding to meet their needs.

Lim Lemtsh. Thank you.