

# OMAHA TRIBE OF NEBRASKA

## Executive Officers

Jason Sheridan, Chairman  
Leander Merrick, Vice-Chairman  
Alan Harlan, Treasurer  
Cheyenne Robinson, Secretary



## Members

Jerome Hamilton  
Galen Aldrich Sr.  
Dustin Lovejoy

## Testimony of Cheyenne Robinson, Secretary of the Omaha Tribe of Nebraska

### Before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Regarding Fiscal Year 2026 Appropriations for the Indian Health Service and Bureau of Indian Affairs

February 26, 2025

Chair, Ranking Member, and Members of the Subcommittee,

Good morning. My name is Cheyenne Robinson, Secretary of the Omaha Tribe of Nebraska. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony regarding the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 appropriations for the Indian Health Service (IHS) and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). I come before you not only as an elected leader of my Tribe but also as an advocate for the inherent rights of the Omaha people, whose government-to-government relationship with the United States is rooted in our sovereign status and formalized through our 1865 Treaty.

### Honoring Treaty Obligations

The Omaha Tribe entered the 1865 Treaty with the United States in good faith, ceding vast territories with the understanding and assurance that the federal government would uphold its obligations to provide for our health, welfare, and self-governance. These commitments are not acts of charity but binding legal obligations based on our political classification as a sovereign nation. The chronic underfunding of the IHS and BIA undermines this solemn promise and jeopardizes the well-being of our people.

### Prioritizing Mental Health, Substance Abuse Treatment, and Public Safety

Access to comprehensive mental health and substance abuse services is a critical need for the Omaha Tribe. Our community is grappling with a rising crisis of addiction and mental health challenges that disproportionately affect our youth and elderly. Current IHS funding does not meet the demand for services, leaving many without timely access to care. We urgently request increased IHS funding to expand culturally relevant mental health and substance abuse programs, focusing on prevention, early intervention, and long-term recovery support. These services are not just healthcare—they are lifesaving measures that directly impact community safety, family stability, and economic productivity.

Compounding this crisis is the state of our correctional facilities. The Omaha Tribe's jail is dilapidated, unsafe, and ill-equipped to manage the needs of individuals with substance use disorders and mental health issues. Incarcerated individuals often do not receive appropriate treatment, further exacerbating their conditions and increasing recidivism rates. Increased BIA funding is necessary to construct a modern, secure, and rehabilitative detention facility that prioritizes treatment, reentry programs, and restorative justice. Investment in a new facility will not only improve public safety but will also ensure that our law enforcement officers and community members are protected and that detainees receive the services needed to reintegrate successfully into society.

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## Strengthening Tribal Self-Governance Through BIA Funding

Beyond the need for enhanced public safety infrastructure, BIA funding is vital to supporting the Omaha Tribe's self-governance. The underfunding of critical programs impedes our ability to deliver essential services, develop infrastructure, and pursue economic opportunities that foster long-term sustainability. Increased BIA appropriations would enable us to:

- Bolster law enforcement capacity and improve community policing efforts.
- Enhance educational opportunities, ensuring our youth have access to quality education and culturally relevant curricula.
- Invest in infrastructure development, including housing, transportation networks, and broadband access.
- Support economic development initiatives aimed at reducing poverty and promoting Tribal self-sufficiency.

## Upholding Sovereignty and Promoting Equity

The United States has repeatedly affirmed its commitment to Tribal sovereignty and self-determination. Adequate funding for the IHS and BIA is fundamental to honoring these principles and ensuring that Tribes can govern effectively and provide for their citizens. The Omaha Tribe has taken significant strides in advancing our community's well-being, but we cannot achieve long-term success without the federal government fulfilling its responsibilities.

## Conclusion

The Omaha Tribe of Nebraska urges Congress to increase FY 2026 appropriations for the Indian Health Service and Bureau of Indian Affairs, with particular emphasis on expanding mental health and substance abuse services and constructing a new detention facility. These investments are crucial to protecting public health, ensuring community safety, and honoring the promises made under our 1865 Treaty. We stand ready to work collaboratively with this Subcommittee and federal partners to ensure that these resources are delivered effectively and respectfully.

Thank you for your consideration and for recognizing the importance of supporting Tribal Nations in a manner that respects our sovereignty and honors the United States' legal obligations. I am available to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully submitted,

**Cheyenne Robinson**, MBA, MLS  
Secretary, Omaha Tribe of Nebraska