



December 2, 2025

Dear Tribal Leader and Urban Indian Organization Leader:

I am writing to share an important update regarding leadership at the Indian Health Service (IHS).

On behalf of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), I want to inform you that HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has delegated to me, in my capacity as Chief of Staff, all delegable authorities, duties, and functions of the IHS Director. This delegation will remain in place while the IHS Director position continues to be vacant.

As part of this transition, Mr. Benjamin Smith will return to his position as the IHS Deputy Director, and Mr. Darrell LaRoche will resume his role as the IHS Deputy Director for Management Operations. Dr. Rose Weahkee also concludes her service in her acting leadership role. Each of these leaders has provided steady guidance and commitment during a period of significant responsibility, and I want to express my sincere appreciation for their service on behalf of the Agency and the Tribal Nations we serve.

I want to assure you that while this leadership transition continues, the mission of the IHS remains constant and strong. We are fully committed to upholding the Government-to-Government relationship and ensuring continuity of services and operations across the Indian health system. The work of raising the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of American Indians and Alaska Natives to the highest level continues to guide every decision we make.

You have my commitment that the IHS will maintain transparency, partnership, and open communication throughout this period. I look forward to continuing our work together to advance Tribal health priorities and to support the delivery of high-quality, culturally grounded care across all our service areas.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact my office by telephone at (301) 443-1083.

Sincerely,

CLAYTON W. FULTON -S

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Clayton W. Fulton
Chief of Staff
(Delegated Authority of the IHS Director)