December 5, 2019

The Honorable John Hoeven
Chairman
Senate Committee on Indian Affairs
838 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Hoeven:

On behalf of the National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH), and the 41 Urban Indian Health Programs (UIHPs) receiving grants under Title V of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA) and the American Indian and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs) they serve and who we represent, we write to express our support of the nomination of Rear Admiral (RADM) Michael D. Weahkee. Furthermore, NCUIH would support any action taken by this committee to ensure his confirmation as Director of the Indian Health Service (IHS) in the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). RADM Weahkee has served as the Principal Deputy Director and Acting Director of the IHS for the past two and a half years, and in that time he has voiced his support and pledged to commit the Agency’s efforts to ensuring the federal trust responsibility to AI/AN people who live in urban communities and receive health care services at an Urban Indian Organization (UIO).

Despite comprising over two-thirds of AI/ANs, urban Indians are too often excluded from federal policies and programs designed to carry out the trust responsibility. The federal trust responsibility extends not only to tribal governments but also to individual Indians. Among the most sacred of the duties encompassed within the federal trust responsibility is the duty to provide for Indian health care. Congress has long recognized the federal government’s obligation to provide health care for AI/AN people who live in urban communities and follow them off reservations.

While serving in his post, RADM Weahkee has repeatedly established his understanding that UIOs are an integral part of the Indian health system, which is comprised of the Indian Health Service (IHS), Tribes, and tribal organizations, and urban Indian organizations (collectively, I/T/Us). NCUIH looks forward to a continued partnership with him as together, we work to ensure the overall health of Indian Country.

Thank you for your consideration of this endorsement.

Respectfully,

[Signature]