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National Doctor's Day Statement "The Advocates for Good Health"

by

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Today may be just another day for most Americans, but for America's physicians it is National Doctor's Day. In today's complex health care system, the physician is the patient's best advocate for ensuring that they receive the best available medical care possible.

The title of "doctor" is more than an honorary title for a physician. It represents a significant achievement of many years, sometimes 13 years or more, of training and education. The education of a physician begins with 4 years of college followed by another 4 years at an accredited medical school. Then a year of internship followed by 2-4 years as a resident physician, on staff at a teaching hospital, treating patients and studying a medical specialty.

After years of training, the physician then completes a comprehensive examination for licensure by a state Board of Medical Examiners. At that stage of their career, they can join the Indian Health Service and begin providing care to our American Indian and Alaska Native patients.

Our doctors at the bedside, in the board rooms, in meetings with families and staff, have all earned the title of "doctor," and I believe it is important that we understand and recognize the achievements and qualifications of our physicians. They hold a special place in the history of the Indian Health Service because reductions in disease and death, improvements in health and quality of life, and the creation of model programs for delivering care in rural areas would not have happened without their dedicated and professional service.

Their commitment to providing quality care and improving the health of individuals, families, and communities is reflected by the accreditation record of our hospitals and clinics, among the highest in the nation, and by the number of local and national awards they receive.

The doctors across the nation deserve our recognition and appreciation for their contributions to the health of the nation. And to the doctors of the Indian Health Service who so professionally serve American Indians and Alaska Natives – we say a special "thank you."