



# THE PAIUTE INDIAN TRIBE OF UTAH

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Written Testimony of  
Chairwoman Laurel Ann Yellowhorse  
Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah

Before the U.S. House Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

## **Regarding: Support for the Tiwahe Initiative – FY 2027**

Good morning Chairman Simpson, Ranking Member Pingree, and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Laurel Ann Yellowhorse, I am the Tribal Chairwoman for a federally recognized Tribe, the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah. The Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah consists of five Bands: Cedar Band, Shivwits Band, Indian Peaks Band, Kanosh Band, and Koosharem Band. Since time immemorial, the Tribe has been located in and around southern Utah. I want to thank you for meeting with us today to discuss the importance of Tiwahe.

Tiwahe is an initiative that started in 2015 with a simple idea: “... *The idea (that) we need to be bringing our services together more around serving families rather than leaving them in silos serving individuals<sup>1</sup>.*” The Tiwahe Initiative is “a family-centered whole-of-Government response to assist families in becoming self-governing and thriving contributors in their communities<sup>2</sup>.” That “whole of government” response is not only at a Federal and State level, but also within our own tribal government.

Too often, government systems are designed around programs that serve individuals in isolation. Tiwahe changes that approach by bringing services together around the strength of the family, ensuring that support is coordinated, culturally grounded, and responsive to the real needs of our communities.

For the Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah, Tiwahe has grown to be more than an initiative—it is a pathway for empowering families to realize their fullest potential while building upon the dignity and inherent strengths of our people.

Through Tiwahe, we have successfully strengthened coordination across critical areas such as housing, education, and workforce development, health and behavioral health services, cultural revitalization, and family support programs, ensuring families receive the support they need to succeed.

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<sup>1</sup> Kevin Washburn, Former Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs, Testimony at the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs Hearing, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> The Native Children’s Commission Implementation Act - Discussion Draft, Section 205

The Tribe conducted the Willow Basket Survey<sup>3</sup> and to highlight a few of the key outcomes from the Tiwahe Program, I will discuss some of the barriers that our members faced and the successes we have had to overcome through the help of the Tiwahe Program.

- Nearly 90% of Paiute families report at least one major health condition. To combat this, we have strengthened our focus on culturally grounded wellness programs, chronic disease prevention, and behavioral health services. These services ensure that our members are receiving the care that they need.
- Educational attainment has improved dramatically since 1968, with approximately 90% of Tribal members completing high school and nearly half obtaining education or credentials beyond high school.
- Employment opportunities have diversified significantly, with Tribal members now working in healthcare, education, business, leadership, and skilled trades.
- Building on findings from the Willow Basket Assessment, the Tribe and Southern Utah University are now developing community education programming and short-term certification pathways that integrate Paiute culture while preparing Tribal members for careers in healthcare, leadership, business, and skilled trades.
- The Tribe is also strengthening cultural revitalization efforts, including language learning, storytelling, and traditional knowledge programs identified by community members as priorities for future generations to ensure that the Tribe's cultural traditions and knowledge continue to thrive for generation to come.
- Tiwahe has helped advance a coordinated "one-stop" model for social services, job placement, youth programming, elder programming, ICWA, and education programs, improving access for families and reducing barriers.
- The Tribe is also developing its first-ever Tribal Court, strengthening tribal sovereignty while creating a family-centered justice system that supports accountability, healing, and family stability.

While these examples are significant, they represent something far greater, which is real families whose lives are changing for the positive. They represent parents gaining stability, children staying connected to their culture and community, and families rediscovering hope and confidence in their future.

Tiwahe underscores the significance of tribal sovereignty and illustrates the positive outcomes that can be achieved when Tribal Nations are given the authority to develop solutions tailored to their communities.

We respectfully urge the Subcommittee to increase funding for the Tiwahe initiative to achieve parity between newly participating tribes and the original six pilot tribes. Additional funding will also promote collaboration among participating tribes, enabling the development of innovative tools and reporting systems that integrate family-centered outcome measurements and support expansion to additional tribes.

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<sup>3</sup> Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah & Southern Utah University, *Paiute Willow Basket Community Assessment* (2025), available at [www.pitu.gov](http://www.pitu.gov)

Tiwahe is not simply an investment in an initiative, it is an investment in stronger families, stronger Tribal Nations, and stronger communities across this country.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today and for your continued commitment to supporting Tribal Nations and strengthening Native families.

Respectfully submitted,



Laurel Yellowhorse, M. a. 12/27/11:31:19 MDT  
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