

Opening Statement

- Thank you to the Subcommittee Chair for holding this legislative hearing on two of my bills – H.R. 4881, the Old Pascua Community Land Acquisition Act, and H.R. 5221, the Urban Indian Confer Act.
- H.R. 4881 – the Old Pascua Community Land Acquisition Act will take a 30-acre parcel of land into the Pascua Yaqui Tribe’s reservation boundaries.
- In 1920, 40 acres of land were donated by A.M. Franklin for the establishment of a “Yaqui Nation” in Arizona. Several families moved to this new Pascua Village, now known as “Old Pascua.”
- Since 1921, this location has been a sacred ceremonial site for the Tribe and holds the oldest formally established Yaqui community in Tucson, Arizona.
- Old Pascua refers to the oldest formally established area where the Yaqui community initially lived before their current tribal lands.

- Through a state negotiated compact, this legislation will provide for gaming activities in the Old Pascua Community.
- H.R. 4881 is a bipartisan bill that will raise the tribal standard of living, improve system coordination and integration of service delivery, and promote the ongoing transmission of Yaqui knowledge, culture, history, and traditions to future generations.
- My other bill H.R. 5221 - the Urban Indian Health Confer Act will require agencies and offices within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to confer with urban Indian organizations (UIOs) on policies and initiatives related to tribal health care for urban American Indian and Alaska Natives.
- Urban Indian Organizations were established in response to the high number of American Indians and Alaska Natives (70%) living and seeking healthcare outside of tribal jurisdictions in cities throughout the U.S.
- H.R. 5221 - An Urban Confer policy at HHS will serve as the preferred method of dialogue between the agency and UIOs.

- HHS’s Urban Confer policy’s limited scope serves as a barrier for UIOs to other healthcare agencies and departments. This was highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic when it came to vaccine allocations. The current policy indicates that HHS was only obligated to initiate communications with tribal governments and other agencies, not UIOs.
- As a result, UIOs were prevented from providing input and delayed vaccine distributions to many urban American Indians and Alaska Natives. H.R. 5221 will remedy this and codify a proper confer policy between HHS and urban Indian organizations.
- H.R. 4881, the Old Pascua Community Land Acquisition Act, and H.R. 5221 – the Urban Indian Health Confer Act are bipartisan bills to assist tribal communities.
- Thank you to the Subcommittee Chair and Ranking Member for having this important hearing and send my appreciation to the Administration and witnesses, who will testify before us today.
- Thank you, and I yield the remaining of my time.