

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THE UNITED STATES 1324 LHOB & CISCO WEBEX July 28, 2022 at 1:00 p.m. ET **Questions for the Record**

Legislative Hearing on *H.R. 5549*

Questions from Rep. Leger Fernández for Ms. Maureen Rosette, Board Member, National Council of Urban Indian Health

1. How would advance appropriations enable urban Indian organizations to better care for the health needs of urban American Indians and Alaska Natives?
 - a. First and foremost advance appropriations would save lives by ensuring that there is a continuity of care regardless of a shutdown or other budgetary disputes. Second, it would allow our organizations to make long-term planning decisions such as facility expansions because we have funding security. And lastly, it will protect our valuable staff who provide care to our communities and eliminate the threat of loss of income during a government shutdown.

Questions from Rep. Grijalva for Ms. Maureen Rosette, Board Member, National Council of Urban Indian Health

1. **In what ways are urban Indian organizations impacted by the current appropriations process for the Indian Health Service?**
 - a. When our funding is disrupted either by a continuing resolution or a shut down it impacts both the long-term planning process for our organizations as well as increases our administrative burden. When funding occurs during a CR, IHS can only expend funds for the duration of a CR, which prohibits longer-term, potentially cost-saving purchases. Additionally, since most of the Indian health services provided by UIOs are under compact agreements with the federal government, there must be a new agreement re-issued by IHS to each awardee every CR. Not only does this force IHS to allocate resources to contract and compact logistics that could be better spent providing care to communities, but the added bureaucracy also increases the administrative burden of our often understaffed organizations
2. **Can you speak on the National Council of Urban Indian Health's (NCUIH) recent advocacy for advance appropriations to both Congress and the Biden administration?**
 - a. NCUIH has been tirelessly advocating in coordination with our fellow Native orgs to ensure funding stability in the upcoming budget. On March 9, 2022, NCUIH joined NIHB and over 70 Tribal nations and national Indian organizations in sending a series of joint letters to Congress requesting advance appropriations for IHS in the FY 2022 omnibus. On April 25, NCUIH worked with a bipartisan group of 28 Representatives who requested advance appropriations for IHS until such time that authorizers move IHS to mandatory spending, and 12 Senators sent a letter with the same requests. Most recently, on June 24, 2022, NCUIH sent letters to Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy to support advance appropriations for IHS. On the Senate side, our policy team has also met with both Sen. Schumer's and Sen. McConnell's offices to advocate on this issue. NCUIH has also been in constant communication with the WH on pursuing advance appropriations, which they have been supportive of.

- 3. Can you elaborate on the issues experienced by urban Indian health care providers during the last partial government shutdown in 2018?**
 - a. Our health organizations are so chronically underfunded, that when lapses in federal funding happen, the results are detrimental. During the last shutdown, several clinics were forced to reduce services, lose staff, or close their doors entirely, forcing them to leave their patients without adequate care. In fact, in a UIO shutdown survey, 5 out of 13 UIOs indicated that they could only maintain normal operations for 30 days without funding and at one UIO there were multiple fatalities. Our relatives are dying due to this uncertainty and it's not right. We can fix this now.

- 4. You mentioned in your testimony that your health facility still has millions of dollars of critical outstanding COVID-19 funding. a. What funding are you referring to and how would an advance appropriations policy for the Indian Health Service have helped with the pandemic?**
 - a. My UIO still has not received over \$7 million of our funding from the American Rescue Plan Act and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act. When Native Americans lost their lives at the highest rates of any population from COVID-19, this funding literally is life or death for Natives receiving care at our clinics. Advance appropriations would have provided stable funding for the IHS during the pandemic that we couldn't rely on with the COVID appropriations.