

**Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the United States
Opening Statement**

- Good afternoon and thank you for joining us during this busy week. I'm honored to recognize the legacy and work of the Dean of the House, Don Young, who was committed to fulfilling the trust responsibility to provide healthcare to American Indians and Alaska Natives.
- Today we will hear testimony on his bipartisan bill, H.R. 5549, the Indian Health Service Advance Appropriations Act.
- H.R. 5549 will authorize advance appropriations for the Indian Health Service (IHS) by amending the Indian Health Care Improvement Act - meaning IHS could receive appropriations for two fiscal years in succession.
- IHS is charged with serving 2.6 million American Indians and Alaska Natives with health care, including many of the communities I represent in New Mexico.
- Earlier this Congress, this subcommittee held a hearing focused on federal facilities that serve tribal communities. During that hearing, we discussed the impacts of inadequate facilities and the limitations they provide for health care due to lack of federal funding.
- I was glad to see President Biden's budget request include mandatory funding for IHS to meet these needs. Now we in Congress must act.
- Today's hearing will focus on how the current status of yearly IHS appropriations burdens IHS, tribal governments, Urban Indian Organizations, and American Indian and Alaska Native communities.
- It has become a practice for Congress to fund the IHS and most federal agencies for portions of each year through Continuing Resolutions - or C.R.s. The continued use of C.R.s limits IHS'

activities and longer-term, inhibits planning and the efficient use of resources.

- Additionally, when government shutdowns occur, the fiscal burden is not on the federal government to address tribal needs. Tribal governments must either cut services or use their own funding to cover federally funded programs without the expectation of reimbursement.
- During the 2018-2019 shutdown, IHS was the only federally funded health care entity to face funding gaps. It is no secret that IHS has not received full funding, and that is before the COVID-19 pandemic. The last time IHS received a full-year appropriation on time was in 1997 - 25 years ago.
- This is why our hearing today is critical. H.R. 5549 will ensure IHS has the funding to adequately provide American Indians and Alaska Native health care and cover the accounts of Indian Health Services, Indian Health Facilities, Contract Support Costs, and Payments for Tribal Leases despite C.R.s or government shutdowns.
- When our esteemed colleague Don Young was laid in state, I was asked by many what he was working on.
- I believe today's hearing and the advancement of this bipartisan bill honors his years of work.
- I call on my colleagues who have spoken so eloquently of his time in Congress to fulfill his legacy by supporting this legislation.
- I thank our witnesses for joining us today and look forward to hearing our witnesses' testimony.