

TESTIMONY OF FIRST NATIONS WOMEN'S ALLIANCE
PROJECT COORDINATOR NATASHA GOURD
BEFORE THE U.S. HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR,
ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES
FISCAL YEAR 2019 APPROPRIATIONS

May 10, 2018

Chairman Calvert, Ranking Member McCollum, Members of the Committee. I respectfully thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Fiscal year 2019 funding priorities.

Introduction My name is Natasha Gourd I am an enrolled member of the Spirit Lake Tribe. Currently, I am the Project Coordinator for the First Nations Women's Alliance a federal non-profit whose mission is strengthen our Tribal communities by creating a forum for leaders to come together to address the issues of domestic violence and sexual assault. We are committed to ending all forms of violence by providing culturally relevant services and resources and facilitating the provision of those services by others in our communities. Furthermore, I have been working within the capacity of "Peacemaking" within Tribal Justice Systems for 5 + years.

Budget Request We as the First Nations Women's Alliance echoes the National Congress American Indians funding request for;

- \$83,000,00 for Base Funding for Tribal Courts
- \$553,000,000 for BIA Law Enforcement and Detention

Restoration of Public Safety and Justice Funding Shortfalls The severity of the Public Safety Crisis in Indian Country is a direct result of underfunding from the federal government regarding justice issues. In contrast remains a top priority in Indian Country as the caseload would be overwhelming if Tribal Courts were to ever come to a standstill. Medium to large tribal justice systems handle on average 1,5000 to 20,000 cases a year. An unofficial estimate around 1.6 million cases per year which the federal and state courts would not want. Hence, the huge obstacle created for Indian Country and the surrounding areas if there continues to be a reduction of Public Safety funding specifically for Criminal Investigations/Police Services, Victim/Witness Assistance Program, Tribal Courts. With the current unmet need exceeding the 2 billion mark in administrative and the variety of interjurisdictional challenges for Public Safety and Tribal Courts it is of the utmost importance the federal government continues to uphold it's responsibility to fulfill it's trust obligations to uphold safety on Tribal lands. Currently, BIA is funded at 20% that rate a negligence to Tribal Court institutions which are frontlines for the preservation of peace and protection of vulnerable men, women and children. This shortfall it undermines to ability of the Public Safety system to adequately provide safety and security for people whom already suffer under some of the worst living conditions in America. Fully funding will translate in upholding

the full integrity of jurisprudence and realization of the implementation of Tribal Law and Order Act of 2010 and also the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013.

Budget Request Fully Fund Human Services & Child Welfare

First Nation's Women's Alliance also echoes the National Congress of American Indians Request to fully fund Human Service/Child Welfare needs in addition to another \$5 million for the continuation of sufficient services to the Tiwahe (Family) Initiative.

- Provide \$50 million to fortify child protective services and ensure meaningful technical assistance to tribal social service programs across Indian Country.

Protect and Fully Fund the Continued Expansion of the Tiwahe Initiative Thank you for funding the Tiwahe Initiatives which in turn supports family and public safety as high on the administrations priorities. We are seeking a continued prioritization of Tiwahe specific funding to advance the program and positively impact all tribes. Spirit Lake Tribe has made real efforts towards addressing the needs of the community thanks to the Tiwahe Initiatives. Providing resources and assisting tribes in addressing poverty, violence, substance abuse, and interventions of youth suicide. Tiwahe provides the leadership needed to bring together BIA programs including Social Services, ICWA, Courts, Job Placement and Training and Housing. Social Service programs in Indian Country is grossly underfunded. Vulnerable men, women and children are the ones whom suffer the most. social services programs to provide culturally-appropriate services with the goal of empowering individuals and families through health promotion, family stability, and strengthening tribal communities. The programs and the courts to keep Indian children in need of foster care in Indian communities where possible. Fully funding these initiatives protect those whom are ineligible for those who fall through the cracks of State funding eligibility. Technical assistance is also of high priority to Tribal Social Service programs as to continue to work through the steady intricacies of jurisdictional and fluidity of tribal populations. Technical Assistance to these types of programs are of direct relation to the type of care vulnerable populations receive.

Summary The proposed budget offers meaningful strong relations with Native Communities in Indian Country. It's imperative to go forward with the spirit of strengthening this continued relationship. The proposed budget delivers community services, executes fiduciary trust responsibilities, and assists in supporting community resilience in the face of a changing tribal environments today and towards the future. Respectfully we ask to take into consideration this testimony to build a continued foundation of success and prosperity for Tribal Nations within these Americas.

Conclusion Thank you for consideration of this testimony.