

**CHAIRMAN ROBERT MIGUEL
AK-CHIN INDIAN COMMUNITY**

**U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON
INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES**

March 9, 2023

Good morning Chairman Simpson, Ranking Member Pingree, and Members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for taking time to hear from me on issues that concern the Ak-Chin Indian Community. My name is Robert Miguel and I am honored to serve as the Chairman of the Ak-Chin Indian Community (Ak-Chin) and discuss our Community's priorities.

I am excited to return to testify in front of this Subcommittee for the first time in a few years, and I will discuss the Ak-Chin Indian Community's priorities, including funding for law enforcement and public safety, 105 (l) lease operations and maintenance, and the need for the Bureau of Indian Affairs to receive advance appropriations.

Our name is directly derived from an O'odham word that refers to a type of farming traditionally practiced by the Ak-Chin people. Throughout our history, we have relied on subsistence and eventually commercial farming for sustenance. Today, we own and operate Ak-Chin Farms, we cultivate more than 15,000 acres of farmland, and the Farms have been a central economic enterprise for the Community since the 1960s. We also have economic entities focused on gaming and hospitality that have grown into major sources of economic development for the entire area.

We are direct neighbors with the City of Maricopa, Arizona, and lie about 35 miles south of downtown Phoenix, Arizona. We are a small but growing tribe with 1,124 enrolled Members and as the area surrounding us continues to grow at one of the fastest rates in the nation, we are committed to being good neighbors while also working hard to build a stronger future for the next generation of Ak-Chin Community members.

Public Safety and Justice

Our Community's law enforcement, court and detention center are all in need of additional funding, and we respectfully request an increase in funding for public safety in Indian Country. Our public safety programs assist with providing support for our Community members, and the growing neighboring communities increase the need for additional law enforcement personnel, facilities and equipment. Additionally, consistent training is needed to effectively protect and serve the Ak-Chin Indian Community and our visitors. We are appreciative of the increase in funding for FY2023 and we respectfully request an increase in public safety justice funding in FY2024.

105 (l) Lease Operations and Maintenance

The Ak-Chin Indian Community is a Self-Governance Tribe with a compact with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). The Compact enables the United States to maintain and improve its unique and continuing trust relationship and responsibility to the Community through tribal self-governance for various programs, services, functions, and activities (PSFAs) such as our public safety, social services, courts, road maintenance and various other vital programs.

The Indian Self-Determination Education and Assistance Act 105 (l) lease program allows the reimbursement of facility costs when part of a facility is used to carry out ISDEAA approved programs, functions, services, or activities. Our expansive self-governance programs allow us to increase the effectiveness of tribal government services while cutting bureaucracy that we must navigate. However, many of our facilities that house Self-Determination programs are in need of repair, and the 105 (l) lease program is effective at supporting facility costs, repairs and maintenance. We request an increase of funding to the 105 (l) lease program.

Advanced Appropriations

Advanced appropriations are a necessity for Tribes going forward to ensure that funds are available in advance to alleviate the unfortunate circumstances so many faced during the 2018-2019 government shutdown. Currently, critical federal programs at the Department of Education, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Labor, and Veteran's Affairs are all authorized for advance appropriations. Funding uncertainty causes Tribes to redistribute funds from other Tribal programs, just to get by, and this results in diminished services in other areas of the tribal government. Advanced appropriations will prevent future lapses in funding associated with government shut downs and will help in keeping critical services uninterrupted.

The Community's efforts to become an IHS Self-Governance Tribe under Title V was impacted by the 2018-2019 government shutdown. Our payments were not disbursed on time and we had to adjust our government operations. Government shutdowns have occurred in the past and advanced appropriations would safeguard and provide predictability for our BIA programs. Even though we do not see a shutdown on the immediate horizon we want to be as prepared as possible in the event there is a future shutdown. We respectfully request advanced appropriations to ensure that tribes are not in a position to have to move funds around during a future government shutdown.

Conclusion

Again, thank you Chairman Simpson and Ranking Member Pingree for allowing me to discuss the Ak-Chin Indian Community's priorities. We hope this Subcommittee will continue to build on previous funding authorizations that have led to increases in BIA funding. I hope you gained an understanding of what our Community's priorities, and how additional funding can support the Ak-Chin Indian Community. Thank you.