

**Testimony of Rep. Deb Haaland (NM-1) for  
Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations Subcommittee Member Day**

Chairman Serrano, Ranking Member Aderholt, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to speak about some key priorities for the CJS bill. It is an honor to be here, and I appreciate the hard work you do.

***2020 Census***

Many areas of New Mexico are quite rural, with little to no broadband access. This makes it challenging to conduct the Census. New Mexico has some of the worst poverty rates in the nation, so it's essential to our state that we have a successful 2020 Census to ensure **both proper representation in this body and the proper distribution of federal resources to our communities.**

The Census Bureau faces a number of challenges, including the Trump administration's efforts to add an inflammatory question about citizenship, that put the success of the 2020 Census in jeopardy. I urge you to fund the Census Bureau at the level needed to get an accurate count, including establishing partnerships with hard to count communities and conducting the necessary outreach.

***Gun Violence***

Every day, 100 Americans die from gun violence and hundreds more are shot or injured. Last month, I joined students at Cleveland High School in New Mexico that were victims of gun violence. Thankfully, no one was physically harmed, but the emotional distress is very real. Students' greatest worry should be preparing for their next exam, not dodging the next bullet. Guns are the second leading cause of death for American children and teens. **Our nation is facing a gun violence epidemic that needs solutions, not mere thoughts and prayers.**

An important part of the solution is improving the background check process, to ensure that guns do not get into the wrong hands. I urge the committee to include \$100 million for the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) program.

***Sexual Assault***

I also urge the committee to support survivors of sexual assault and law enforcement efforts by providing at least \$49 million for the National Sexual Assault Kit Initiative, the level passed by the House in FY2018. My own state of New Mexico has seen the benefit of these grants; at the end of 2018 the state lab cleared its backlog. But there is still work to be done. Backlogs persist in many of the other labs across the state. Every rape kit that remains untested represents a missed opportunity to bring closure and healing to a survivor, and compromises public safety. Sexual assault survivors deserve better, and Congress should support any efforts that bring about more justice.

***Indian Country Funding***

Indigenous people face serious problems in our country. The US Commission on Civil Rights' *Broken Promises* report details the government's breach of the trust responsibility and neglect of federal obligations causing a lack of funding for fundamental services for Native Americans.

The chronic lack of funding has led to a severe lack of resources for tribal public safety and justice systems, resulting in Native Americans experiencing some of the nation's highest rates of crime and victimization. The DOJ also reported more than 4 in 5 Native women have experienced violence within their lives; with more than half enduring sexual violence. In urban areas, the silent crisis of **Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women** is increasing.

To address this crisis in the Native American community, I urge the committee to provide funding for victim advocates in state courts, especially for indigenous people experiencing sexual assault and domestic violence in urban locations.

Thank you for the opportunity to be heard and look forward to a CJS bill that addresses the needs of all Americans.