

Witness Statement Congressman Don Young

Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the United States Hearing 9/25/19

Mr. Chairman, thank you for scheduling my bill, H.R. 1135, for this hearing.

Before I begin, I would like to introduce a witness from my home state that will be testifying in the next panel. **Verné Boerner** is the President and CEO of the Alaska Native Health Board. She is Inupiaq and is a member of the Native Village of Kiana. She is a strong leader in the effort to improve health care for all Alaska Natives, and I am glad to have her before the committee.

The United States has a trust responsibility to support the health and well being of Alaska Natives and American Indians. This responsibility has been undermined by years of late appropriations bills, reliance on continuing resolutions, and government shutdowns.

This harms both tribal and I-H-S health care providers' budgeting, recruitment, retention, provision of services, facility maintenance, and more. During shutdowns, tribal health clinics have had to limit care and have faced prescription shortages. We cannot let failures in the appropriations process put lives on the line.

My bill is simple: it provides budget authority to fund I-H-S one fiscal year in advance. Advance appropriations funding would become available one fiscal year after the year of the appropriations act in which it was allotted.

The advance appropriation does not count against the appropriations subcommittee's allocation until the year it becomes available. After the initial year, Congress would revert to appropriations bills containing only one fiscal year of funding.

Congress already authorized advance appropriations for the VA in 2009 and did so in a bipartisan manner. Both the VA and I-H-S missions are based on sacred federal obligations to provide healthcare to distinct groups. Both should receive advance appropriations.

In closing I would like to thank Congresswoman McCollum for her bill that also covers B-I-A and B-I-E. I am a cosponsor of her bill and ask that the committee move both concurrently to maximize our chances for final passage.