

Opening Statement

I want to thank Chair Leger Fernandez and Ranking Member Young for holding a hearing on my bill, the Urban Indian Health Providers Facilities Improvement Act.

I also want to thank our witnesses for being here today.

My bill H.R. 3496 would allow Urban Indian health providers to spend the money they already receive from Congress on the projects most needed to improve patient care.

Under an old, obsolete provision of law, Urban Indian organizations are effectively prohibited from using their funds on construction, renovation, and other infrastructure improvement projects – unless the project was undertaken exclusively to maintain an accreditation standard that is no longer in use by the vast majority of UIOs.

The types of projects that haven been delayed by and gone unfunded due to this provision include:

- the construction of urgent care facilities and infectious disease areas;
- projects to expand primary care and urgent care patient capacity;
- ventilation system improvements;
- And upgrades to telehealth and electronic health records systems.

What's worse is that over 70% of UIOs report having infrastructure backlogs in these areas.

UIOs provide culturally competent care for the over 70 percent of American Indians and Alaska Natives who live in urban centers, many in low-income, medically underserved areas.

Making sure UIOs can use their limited resources on the projects they know will most benefit patients is how we ensure that these vulnerable populations receive the best care possible.

That's why my bipartisan bill simply removes this obsolete provision of law and allows UIOs to spend their money where it will be most effective for patients.

I look forward to hearing from our witness today, Ms. **Sonya Tetnowski** about how this bill will pave the way for increased investment in urban Indian health infrastructure without Congress spending an additional dime.

Thanks again to our witnesses for being here.

I yield back.