

Good morning – Thank you to Chairman Hurd and Ranking Member Leger-Fernandez for holding this hearing today and considering my legislation H.R. 504 - The Miccosukee Reserved Area Amendments Act. For those of you who do not know me, I am Representative Carlos Gimenez, and I proudly represent Florida's 28th Congressional District which runs from Miami Dade County to the beautiful Florida Keys. My district encompasses the Florida Everglades and the Miccosukee Reserve Area.

I have seen firsthand the vital role that the Miccosukee Tribe has played in our great State's history, culture, and environmental stewardship. The Miccosukee Reserved Area Amendments Act ensures that the Miccosukee Tribe has the legal authority to manage and protect their land and preserve their traditional way of life. Specifically, the bill would amend the Miccosukee Reserved Area Act to include the Osceola Camp as part of the Miccosukee Reserved Area. The Osceola Camp is an inhabited tribal village within the Everglades. It is a site of incredible historical and cultural importance to the tribe, and the bill aims to allow the tribe to optimize water flows to the Everglades National Park without affecting residences of the camp. This would allow the Tribe to raise the structures in the camp and safeguard the area from destructive flooding which threatens the area.

The Miccosukee Tribe has been responsible stewards of the Everglades and have worked tirelessly to protect the unique and fragile ecosystem that is an integral lifeblood for conservation of Florida. It is only right that we amend the MRA area to allow the Tribe to protect the Osceola Camp. The Miccosukee Tribe's leadership in conservation efforts have helped maintain the cultural heritage, natural beauty, and biodiversity of South Florida. The Tribe should be granted the autonomy to protect their land, and I urge support of this bill. Lastly, I would like to thank Miccosukee Tribe Chairman Talbert Cypress for being here today – his presence highlights the importance of this legislation to the tribe and South Florida as a whole.

Thank you for your consideration, and I yield back.