



Statement of

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Commissioner**

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Administration for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

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**Committee on Indian Affairs
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Chairman Hoeven, Vice Chairman Udall, and Members of the Committee, it is my honor to testify before you on behalf of the Department of Health and Human Services concerning Native American language preservation and maintenance. My name is Jeannie Hovland and I serve as the Commissioner of the Administration for Native Americans (ANA) within the Administration for Children and Families. I had the pleasure of meeting with some of you and your staff during my confirmation process just over a month ago. As you may recall, I am a proud member of the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe located in South Dakota and worked for Senator John Thune of South Dakota for nearly 13 years.

I am a proud proponent of our programs and I have been eager and grateful to visit our grantees and their communities. Seeing the diversity of tribal nations first hand is the best way to understand their concerns and specific social, economic, and cultural context. I have been able to spend time at our ANA Native Youth Summit in Missoula, Montana, to visit some of our grantees on the Big Island and Oahu in Hawaii, and in the Pueblos of Santa Ana, Cochiti, Isleta, and Taos in New Mexico. Next week, I will travel to Midwest City, Oklahoma to join our Federal partners at the Bureau of Indian Education and the Department of Education's White House Initiative of American Indian and Alaska Native Education in the fifth annual Native American Language Summit. This year's Summit theme is "Honoring the Gift of Native American Languages" and we expect nearly 150 experts and practitioners to attend. Next month, I will host my first Tribal Consultation for the Administration for Children and Families, meet with our Tribal Advisory Committee, and travel to Fairbanks, Alaska for the Secretary's Tribal Advisory Committee.

These visits are important for promoting ANA's mission and underlying goal of self-sufficiency and cultural preservation for Native Americans. We provide discretionary grants, training, and technical assistance to tribes, tribal organizations, non-profits, and Native American communities, including American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and Native Pacific Islanders. We support three program areas authorized under the Native American Programs Act of 1974 (NAPA): Native American Languages, Environmental Regulatory Enhancement, and Social and Economic Development Strategies.

We believe that language revitalization is essential for continuing Native American culture and strengthening self-determination. Native American values and traditions are embedded in language. These values and traditions are a source of resilience and cultural cohesion that connects us with past and future generations.

Many of you are familiar with the important role Native American Code Talkers played in the success of the United States victories in World War I and World War II. Although these heroes were not allowed to use their language in day to day life, their languages were relied upon to communicate vital information. Unfortunately, most of the code talkers have passed away. We need to honor their sacrifice by keeping their languages alive along with their legacy.

The use of Native American languages has declined for a variety of reasons, including resistance to bilingual education in many states and the basic fact that a majority of Native American students attend English medium schools. However, there is still a fundamental desire to maintain and revitalize native languages. In response, Congress supported this effort by passing the

Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act of 2006. This law amended NAPA to specifically target grants for language immersion and restoration programs. These two methods show promise in creating fluent speakers who, in turn, continue to revitalize, preserve, and maintain native languages.

The three year Esther Martinez Initiative (EMI) projects have been funded for just over a decade. We continually refine our application and project reporting processes to elicit stronger applications and better ways to document grantees' progress in meeting their project objectives. With the Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 funding opportunity announcements for the EMI Program and Native American Language Preservation and Maintenance Program, ANA strengthened its approach to funding rigorous immersion and language acquisition programs through the addition of the ANA Project Framework. In this framework, a new project monitoring tools section requires the applicant to describe a feasible monitoring and outcome evaluation plan. In addition, all applicants must now achieve one of four project outcomes: increased language fluency; increased community member use of language learning resources; language teachers certified; or increased capacity to implement a language program.

Since 2010, ANA has held two separate annual competitions for the language projects, Native American Language Preservation and Maintenance Program and EMI. Between 2010 and 2018, ANA received 843 applications for all Native American language projects. Of those, 155 applications were for EMI projects. The amount of funding we distribute for all program areas varies based on the number of projects ending. For example, the total funding for new EMI

projects this year is just over \$2 million. With this, we are able to meet approximately 29 percent of funding requested in new applications.

Congress appropriated approximately \$54 million to ANA for FY 2018, of which we awarded approximately \$45.7 million through competitive funding opportunity announcements. Congress has requested, in its explanatory statement accompanying the FY 2018 appropriations, that ANA continue to support language funding at or above the minimum of \$12 million for native languages overall and \$4 million for projects funded under EMI. We have met that target annually. In FY 2018, we estimate providing \$4.3 million for EMI grants, \$5.86 million for preservation and maintenance grants, and \$1.9 million for Native Language Community Coordination, for a combined total of over \$12 million in our language specific funding area. Approximately \$31.6 million was awarded for our social and economic development strategies, and just under \$2 million was awarded for environmental and regulatory enhancement grants. The balance of our funds was spent on contracts to support technical assistance and grantee support.

I would like to share information about the success of two of our current EMI grants. One is the Cook Inlet Tribal Council in Alaska. They are operating a Yup'ik Language Nest. Language nests are for the youngest learners, and these children aged birth to three are part of a full day, year round Early Head Start setting. When they transition to the Head Start classroom, they will continue to receive the minimum of 500 hours of instruction solely in Yup'ik. The project also provides weekly family-centered Yup'ik language instruction to parents and caregivers, and monthly referrals to cultural activities in the community. Our regional program manager of

Tribal Head Start programs was able to visit them recently and was impressed with what they have been able to achieve. Tribal Head Start grantees have consistently requested additional resources to implement immersion, and ANA funding has been used to enhance Head Start services when resources are unavailable from the Office of Head Start.

In 2012, ANA provided start-up funding to Sitting Bull College for a Lakota immersion preschool on the Standing Rock Reservation. During the first three years, the college was able to hire and train staff as well as recruit families to be part of the immersion school. After the important progress of this project, they applied and received EMI funding in 2015 to develop language immersion classes and curriculum for kindergarten through third grade. They have chosen to follow the Montessori Method, and therefore, the project also includes intensive training for staff in Montessori methodology, language acquisition, immersion techniques, rigorous parent involvement, and language learning. In addition, the college is seeking North Dakota accreditation for a kindergarten through third grade school.

We thank Congress for the additional funding provided to ANA in recent years. With these appropriations, we funded five Native Language Community Coordination Demonstration (NLCC) projects to build upon the successes of ANA's short-term, project-based native language funding. The five projects are located in Alaska, California, Montana, and two in Oklahoma. The NLCC is intended as a demonstration that will address gaps in community coordination across the native language educational continuum. In 2016, ANA staff held the first cohort convening for team building, goal setting, and baseline measure development. In 2017, we developed both cohort-wide and project-specific indicators. Recipients were actively engaged in

deciding which measures would be indicators of success for their community and across the cohort. We are now beginning the third year of this demonstration project and have worked with our staff and contractors to begin setting the stage for the Report to Congress which will be completed at the end of this demonstration.

Currently, ANA has four geographically focused technical assistance centers. This year, ANA awarded an additional contract to specifically support NLCC projects. The virtual NLCC Technical Assistance Center assists recipients in maximizing language revitalization efforts. The Center launched a website that connects the five NLCC recipients and provides native language resources, tools, and community engagement. The website is also available to all ANA native language grantees and the public.

During my tenure as commissioner, I have three main goals to strengthen our language program:

- 1) Ensuring that we are using ANA resources the best we can without duplication.
- 2) Making sure we identify and provide outreach to lower capacity tribes/communities that have never had a language grant.
- 3) Making materials more readily available to use as sample resources by cataloguing them, and, with the permission of the tribe or entity that developed them, sharing them more broadly.

We are thankful for the long standing support of this Committee in achieving the mission of ANA. We look forward to working with Congress to reform the Native American Programs Act, including the amendments to the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act to 1) authorize the transmission of products developed under Native American language grants to the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C., 2) incorporate evaluation

practices with current principles to measure effectiveness of outcomes or impact to identify, implement, and sustain effective programs and practices, and 3) eliminate duplicative and ineffective procedures related to publication of annual funding opportunity announcements that currently require ACF to engage in a rulemaking process under the Administrative Procedure Act prior to publishing annual funding opportunity announcements to the public.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify and I would be happy to answer any questions.