

United States Senate Committee on Indian Affairs

Senator John Hoeven, Chairman

Testimony from Scott J. Davis, Executive Director, North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission

Wednesday, July 1 2020

Greetings Chairman Hoeven and members of the U.S. Committee on Indian Affairs. My name is Scott J. Davis, a proud member of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and descendent of the Turtle Mt. Band of Chippewa. My Lakota name is Oksate' Tawa'-His Celebration. I greet you all today with a warm handshake and good heart.

I was given to permission from our North Dakota (ND) Tribal Nations to provide testimony today regarding the working relations between our 5 ND Tribal Nations, ND State-Governor's Office and Federal Partners regarding the COVID 19 pandemic.

Since the start of the Covid19 Pandemic, I immediately reached out to the 5 ND Tribal Leaders in asking them how they are going to respond to the pandemic in declaring a State of Emergency. As you now, Tribes have the authority to Declare on their own, through the Sanford Act, or to Declare with the Governor. In this case, the Tribes chose to Declare with Governor Doug Burgum. By doing so, it opened a lot of resources to the Tribes.

Since then, we have committed to weekly calls from Governor Burgum to the 5 Tribal Chairs, Tribal Councils, Tribal Clinics and the Indian Health Service. Majority of the calls entail discussion about Protective Personal Equipment (PPE) and Testing Kits/Supplies. Discussions also entail guidance on opening businesses, schools and Tribal Colleges.

Most importantly, we have partnered with the 5 ND Tribal Nations in conducting Testing Events. Two weeks ago, we finished our first round in testing all 5 ND Tribes. Today, we are continuing those partnered Testing Events in making sure that all ND Tribal communities and members get tested on a regular basis as requested from Tribal leadership. The events, at times, are led by the ND National Guard in partnership with the Tribal Incident Command Staff, Tribal Health Staff, Indian Health Service and local County Public Health offices.

As a result of strong working relations and testing thousands of Tribal members, we have seen low positive COVID 19 cases on each of the 5 ND Tribal Nations. We attribute this to resources available and delivered to the Tribes, e.g. PPE, Testing Kits, surge plans, data sharing and consistent communications.

This partnership is a result of the commitment Governor Burgum has made with the 5 ND Tribal Nations since he took office. Tribal Engagement is one of five initiatives under the Burgum administration. Prior to the pandemic, Governor Burgum's office and my office have held countless meetings with the Tribes and have held 3 conferences entitled, Strengthening Tribal, State and Federal Relations. Each conference has had over 300 attendees from Tribal, State and Federal leaders and agencies.

This concludes my testimony; I will stand for any questions.

Wopila, Che'Migwetch- Thank you.