

**Written Testimony of Greg Stuckey  
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**Field Oversight Hearing before the United States Senate  
Committee on Indian Affairs**

**“Overcrowded Housing and the Impacts on American Indian  
and Alaska Natives”**

**Saturday, August 25, 2018**

## *Introduction*

Thank you Chairman Hoeven, Senator Murkowski and Members of the Committee for this opportunity to discuss overcrowded housing and the impacts on American Indian and Alaska Natives (AIAN) and the programs administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), authorized by the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996 (NAHASDA).

As the Administrator for HUD's Alaska Office of Native American Programs (AONAP) and formerly as the Administrator Advisor for AONAP, I have had the opportunity to visit and work with AIAN communities to learn first-hand about the issues and challenges the tribes face, and to hear directly from tribal leaders what we need to do to strengthen and improve HUD's policies and programs for Alaska Natives. Far too many AIAN communities struggle with overcrowded housing, shortages of affordable housing, substandard living conditions, and significant barriers to economic opportunity.

Today, one out of four Native Americans lives in poverty – including more than one-third of all Native American children. Far too many families live in unacceptable circumstances and face a future that lacks access to educational and economic opportunity.

To put this into greater perspective, in 2006-2010, AIAN people living in tribal areas had a poverty rate and an unemployment rate that were approximately twice as high as the national averages. During this same period, AIAN people in large tribal areas were more than seven times as likely to live in housing that was overcrowded and more than four times as likely to live in housing that did not have adequate plumbing facilities and/or kitchens than the national average.

In 2017, HUD published *Housing Needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives in Tribal Areas*, the product of a congressionally mandated, multi-year study of housing needs and conditions in Indian Country. The study concluded that 68,000 units were needed to address overcrowding of the AIAN population in tribal areas (33,000 new units and 35,000 units to replace ones that were severely physically inadequate). The study also estimated, during the same period, between 42,000 and 85,000 people in tribal areas were staying with friends or relatives only because they had no other housing option.

## *HUD Native American Programs*

In my capacity as the Administrator, I work closely with HUD senior leadership to oversee Federal programs that support Native American communities: the Indian Community Development Block Grant (ICDBG) program; the Indian Housing Loan Guarantee (Section 184) program; the Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG) formula program; the Tribal Housing Activities Loan Guarantee (Title VI) program; the Tribal HUD-VASH demonstration program; and the soon to be announced IHBG Competitive program.

**ICDBG Program.** In 1977, the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 was amended to set aside competitively awarded funding for American Indian tribes within the Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) program. It is a competitive, flexible program

that funds myriad local community investments – including, affordable housing infrastructure in Indian Country, such as water, sewer, and community facilities. Congress also typically appropriates funding under this program to address imminent threats to health and safety and has provided specific funding for mold remediation.

During the last five years (2013-2017), ICDBG has funded the construction of 144 community buildings and the substantial rehabilitation of almost 3,300 affordable housing units. In FY 2017, ICDBG funded the construction of 20 community buildings and the rehabilitation of 555 affordable housing units. In Alaska, it funded the rehabilitation of 79 housing units, construction of nine new housing units, construction of a multi-purpose community building, rehabilitation of a senior center, and rehabilitation of a family violence shelter.

**Section 184 Program.** The Section 184 program was authorized by the Housing and Community Development Act of 1992, as amended. Since its inception, the program has guaranteed more than 41,000 mortgage loans totaling more than \$7 billion. The program is the primary vehicle to access mortgage capital in Indian communities by providing access to market-rate, private mortgage capital to qualified Native American families. In addition to individual home loans, tribes and tribally designated housing entities (TDHE) are eligible borrowers. As borrowers, tribes and TDHEs can finance and develop new rental housing or create homeownership opportunities for tribal members through lease purchase programs.

**NAHASDA Programs.** NAHASDA is the statute that authorizes the Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG) program and the Title VI loan guarantee program.

NAHASDA supports the government-to-government relationship between the Federal Government and tribal governments, established by long-standing treaties, court decisions, statutes, Executive Orders, and the United States Constitution. NAHASDA recognizes the importance of tribal sovereignty and is designed to provide flexibility and local control, so that each tribe can decide how best to address its unique housing needs and economic priorities.

The IHBG program is the single largest source of Federal funding for housing in Indian Country. IHBG funds are distributed annually, by formula, to eligible tribes or their TDHEs, to provide a range of affordable housing activities that primarily benefit low-income Indian families living on Indian reservations or in other Indian areas.

In FY 2017, tribes built or acquired 851 affordable housing units using IHBG funds, and about 4,629 units were substantially rehabilitated. In addition, tribes operated, maintained, and renovated about 41,000 units of housing developed under the U.S. Housing Act of 1937. Since the program's first year of funding in 1998 through September 2017, recipients have built or acquired more than 40,000 units of affordable housing and rehabilitated about 92,000 units. This represents some of the most important and consistent uses of program funds, but it does not reflect the entire scope of program activity. For example, since 2013, tribes have used IHBG funds to purchase around 1,359 acres of land to develop affordable housing and have provided down payment or closing cost assistance to more than 4,269 families.

The Title VI Loan Guarantee Program (Title VI) promotes affordable housing opportunities by leveraging IHBG funds with private capital. Under Title VI, a tribe or TDHE can use IHBG funds to leverage private financing to fund affordable housing activities, so that it can undertake larger affordable housing projects. HUD guarantees 95 percent of the principal and interest on the loan, and tribes pledge a portion of their annual IHBG grant as payment and security for the loan. Title VI projects often use multiple sources of funding, span several years, and include infrastructure development. From the inception of the Title VI program in 2000 through June 30, 2018, HUD has guaranteed a total of 100 loans, for a total of \$243.1 million. Approximately 3,276 affordable units are associated with these loans.

According to the *Housing Needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives in Tribal Areas*, "...tribes have demonstrated the capacity to construct and rehabilitate housing for low-income families at substantial levels under the NAHASDA framework." Since 1998, under NAHASDA, tribes have not only produced more housing units per year, but they have produced better housing – housing that is tailored for local conditions, customs, and climates. Tribes also use the flexible block grant in many different and innovative ways to address unique local needs, such as assisting college students with housing, counseling prospective homeowners, providing self-sufficiency training to residents, and maintaining critical community infrastructure.

**New ONAP Programs.** Two new ONAP efforts, the Tribal HUD-VASH demonstration program and the recently appropriated funds for new IHBG competitive grants, are aimed at addressing the issues of homelessness, overcrowding, and lack of decent affordable housing in Indian Country.

The Tribal HUD-VASH program is a partnership with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to provide case management services and housing to veterans who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness. Tribal HUD-VASH is modeled after the standard HUD-VASH program, which has been successful in many communities across the country but was unable to reach eligible Native American veterans living on tribal lands, largely because tribes and TDHEs were not eligible to administer the program.

Currently, 300 Native American veteran families are being housed by the program. Here in Alaska, two of the three Tribal HUD-VASH grantees in the state, Cook Inlet Regional Housing Authority and Tlingit and Haida Regional Housing Authority, are close to fully utilizing their grant funding, housing 34 veterans (17 each) out of a possible 40 veterans. Nationwide, HUD and VA are working together to support full utilization of the 500 Tribal HUD-VASH vouchers funded to date.

The FY 2018 Consolidated Appropriations Act authorized \$100 million for new IHBG competitive grants to address housing needs in Indian Country. HUD is currently setting up the framework and developing a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for this new program. Funds will be awarded based on need and capacity, and new construction and rehabilitation projects will be prioritized. HUD anticipates publishing a NOFA this winter and awarding the funding the spring of 2019 – after allowing the tribes 90 days to submit an application for this new program.

In conclusion, HUD's Indian Housing programs, including IHBG, ICDBG, Section 184, and Tribal HUD-VASH, are examples of Federal programs that are addressing overcrowding in Native American and Alaska Native communities by providing local choice, streamlining Federal requirements, and leveraging private market investment while respecting tribal self-governance.

ONAP will continue to work together, at both the local and headquarters levels, with tribes and with HUD senior leadership to find ways to address overcrowding and leverage the limited housing resources in Indian Country.

Thank you again for this opportunity to appear before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.