



## **Fort Berthold Diabetes Program**

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### **United States Senate Committee On Indian Affairs March 29, 2017**

Good afternoon Committee, my name is Jared Eagle, I am the Director of the Fort Berthold Diabetes Program in New Town, ND. We serve the people of the Three Affiliated Tribes, the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation. Our program has benefitted from 18 years of SDPI funding providing essential diabetes related services to our people ranging from clinical care and prevention for the first 15 years and specifically targeted towards prevention initiatives the past three years.

I cannot express enough the importance of the SDPI initiative and the resources that it provides to our community. Through SDPI funding we are able to provide essential treatment and prevention initiatives to our 750 diagnosed patients and over 1,200 youth spread out among our six communities and five schools in a 250 mile radius.

The focus of our program is to provide access to effective nutrition and physical activity opportunities not accessible to the people on our reservation. These initiatives include group fitness classes, cooking classes, grocery store tours, one-on-one dietitian consultation and prevention resources through screening and education.

We live in a food desert, and of the six communities on Fort Berthold only two have grocery stores and access to fresh produce and healthy food options. The overweight and obesity rates on Fort Berthold are 55% among youth grades K-12 and 86% among the adult population. The direct link between overweight/obesity and diabetes prevalence, specifically in Native Americans, the importance of SDPI programming could not be more evident.

One major aspect that we incorporate to combat this epidemic which effects about 15% of the MHA Nation is our Healthy Futures Program. We screen 1,200 youth in grades K-12 to identify if they are overweight or obese. Those with a high Body Mass Index (BMI), are then screened for diabetes, and if they show signs of being pre-diabetic they are referred for more intense follow-up services with a pediatrician and our clinical team. Through this process we are able to connect directly with the parents to start making the necessary changes to develop and instill healthy behaviors to avoid a lifestyle of chronic disease.

The work we do at the Fort Berthold Diabetes Program allows us to connect with the communities, and provides us the opportunity to reach a broad demographic of people that our IHS clinic or another hospital simply cannot reach outside of a traditional medical practice. Culturally, we are able to create deep and lasting connections as well in providing services such as traditional food education, gardening, language and educating at powwows and other community gatherings that reach into and across the communities and make a much stronger individual connection and save lives.

Through SDPI funding we are able to provide these types of services to reduce the incidence of diabetes, preserving the health of our people and reducing the long-term health care costs that they could face. Thank you for allowing me to testify and I would be happy to answer any questions or provide any additional information.