



Statement of

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Before the

**Committee on Indian Affairs
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Chairman Tester, Vice Chairman Barrasso, and members of the Committee, it is my honor to testify before this Committee on behalf of the Department of Health and Human Services on S. 2299. I am a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, which is located in South Dakota. I serve as the Commissioner for the Administration for Native Americans (ANA), which is part of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF).

ANA's mission is to support Native American communities to be self-determining, healthy, economically self-sufficient, and culturally and linguistically vibrant. We achieve our mission by providing discretionary grants, training, and technical assistance to tribes and Native American communities, including American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and Native Pacific Islanders. ANA supports three program areas: Native American Languages, Environmental Regulatory Enhancement (ERE), and Social and Economic Development Strategies (SEDS). We are pleased that this Committee is considering reauthorizing the Native American language provisions of the Native Americans Programs Act of 1974 (NAPA), the statute that authorizes and governs ANA programs.

For fiscal year (FY) 2013, Congress appropriated approximately \$45.5 million to ANA, which distributed nearly \$40 million to Native American communities competitively. Funding for FY 2014 is \$46.5 million, which is an increase from FY 2013. In addition to providing competitive grants, ANA uses its funding to provide training and technical assistance to Native American communities, as required by Section 804 of NAPA. As a result of this training and technical assistance, 80 percent of applications for FY 2013 were considered of sufficient quality to be funded had additional funds been available.

ANA believes that language revitalization is essential to continuing Native American culture and strengthening a sense of community. Use of Native American languages builds identity and assists communities in moving toward social cohesion and self-sufficiency. ANA encourages applicants to involve elders and other community members in determining proposed language project goals and implementing project activities. ANA funding provides opportunities to assess, plan, develop, and implement projects to ensure the survival and vitality of Native American languages.

For over a decade, ANA awarded Native American language preservation and maintenance funds to eligible entities under the Native American Languages Act of 1992, but utilization of Native American languages continued to decline for a variety of reasons. In response to this dramatic and continued decline, Congress passed the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Preservation Act of 2006. The law amended NAPA to provide grants for language immersion and restoration programs, two methods that have proven to be highly successful in creating fluent speakers.

ANA has funded many successful projects that have resulted in increased usage and fluency of Native American languages. For example, the Lower Brule Community College in South Dakota received an ANA grant to certify Lakota language instructors for the Lower Brule education system, create a K-12 Lakota language curriculum meeting state and national standards for language instruction, and promote Lakota language and culture in the Lower Brule community. Before the project, the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe had no language curriculum for K-

12 students. At the project's end, the Tribe had four trained, certified, experienced, motivated, and skilled educators, all capable of making Lakota language classes meaningful and accessible to youth on the reservation.

Similarly, the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe of Alaska used its ANA grant to integrate Lingit classes into the Yakutat Public school system, build the capacity of Lingit language teachers, and develop electronic teaching and learning resources. As a result of the project, 102 youth and 40 adults have increased their ability to speak Lingit.

Finally, an ANA grant helped the Fort Belknap College in Montana produce young White Clay language speakers, building on the initial success of the White Clay Immersion School. An objective of the project was to hire and train two language teachers, develop curriculum and training materials, and develop an advisory council to provide guidance on the curriculum. At the end of the three year project, the College held 185 language classes, trained two language teachers, and developed a language curriculum. As a result of these efforts, nine people achieved fluency in the language.

Since 2010, ANA has held two separate annual competitions for language projects, the Native American Language Preservation and Maintenance Program and the Esther Martinez Initiative (EMI). Between 2006 and 2013, ANA received 853 applications for all Native American language projects. Of those, 80 applications (received between 2008 and 2013¹) were for EMI projects. In 2014, we saw an over 100 percent increase in EMI applications, from 14 applications in 2013 to 30 applications reviewed this year. The total number of language applications received is close to the same as previous years, at 94 applications.

Although Congress has not made additional appropriations to expand ANA's discretionary program, the ANA has doubled the funds available for Native language programs by shifting funds from ERE and SEDS. In FY 2014, we provided nearly \$13 million (\$12,820,867) to roughly 60 communities, up from approximately \$6 million in FY 2010.

In FY 2014, we expect to fund approximately 20 percent of EMI applications and 16 percent of Preservation and Maintenance projects. The unmet demand in both categories remains high. In addition, based on grantee interviews, we believe that the authority to fund EMI and Preservation and Maintenance projects for longer periods (up to five years, rather than the current three years) would result in increased sustainability of the gains made. Grantees would have more time to build a community of speakers, strengthen partnerships, and secure additional funding as projects move beyond the initial planning and implementation stages. Additional feedback from ANA grantees also indicates that lowering the required number of participating students from ten to five for language nests, and from fifteen to ten for survival schools, would allow more communities to apply. ANA's total investment in Native American language projects for FY 2010 to 2014 will be approximately \$60 million.

Listening sessions and tribal consultation indicate that the extra investment in Native American language programs is critical to our communities. The Social and Economic Development

¹ The Esther Martinez Initiative was enacted in 2006, but it was not its own funding category in ANA until FY2008.

Strategies program continues to be the grant program for which we receive the most applications. In FY 2013, ANA reviewed a total of 298 applications, 192 of which 192 were for SEDS. Of these 192 applications, ANA was able to provide funding for 39 new awards at approximately \$10 million. This provided funding for one in five applications. This total included special initiatives like the Native Asset Building Initiative and the Sustainable Employment and Economic Development Strategies grants that target ANA investment towards economic empowerment, but still within the framework of community-driven projects.

We are thankful for the continued support of this Committee in achieving the ANA mission. We look forward to working with Congress to reauthorize the Native American Programs Act including the Esther Martinez Native Languages Act, which continues to receive appropriations. From a program administration perspective, reauthorizing NAPA as a whole would also provide an opportunity to update outdated program regulations which track the current statute, which is necessary for improved program oversight and accountability.

ANA looks forward to the day when all “Native Communities are Thriving,” and we look forward to working with you to make that happen.

I would be happy to answer any questions.