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S. HRG. 115–404

OVERCROWDED HOUSING AND THE IMPACTS ON AMERICAN INDIANS AND ALASKA NATIVES

FIELD HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

AUGUST 25, 2018

Printed for the use of the Committee on Indian Affairs

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE
33–406 PDF WASHINGTON : 2018

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OVERCROWDED HOUSING AND THE IMPACTS ON AMERICAN INDIANS AND ALASKA NATIVES

SATURDAY, AUGUST 25, 2018

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Savoonga, AK.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:56 a.m. Hogarth Kingeekuk Sr. Memorial School, Savoonga, Alaska, Hon. Lisa Murkowski presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. LISA MURKOWSKI, U.S. SENATOR FROM ALASKA

Senator MURKOWSKI. Good morning. Before we begin the hearing of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, I would like to ask Barbara Kogassagoon to come and provide us with an invocation and a blessing. So Barbara, if you would share with us.

Ms. KOGASSAGOON. [Invocation and remarks off microphone].

Senator MURKOWSKI. Barbara, thank you. It is so good to have our esteemed elder begin this hearing with words of welcome and words of prayer. Thank you.

With that, the Committee will come to order. We are here this morning in Savoonga to listen and to focus on over-crowded housing and the impacts on American Indians and Alaska Natives. I think that this is probably, perhaps most certainly, the very first ever Congressional hearing that has been held in Savoonga, Alaska. Pretty sure that that is accurate.

So I'm very pleased today to be able chair this field hearing for the Senate Indian Affairs Committee. I want to thanking those of you who have helped us make this possible this morning, so many of your community leaders. To the community of Savoonga for hosting, not only myself and those who are traveling with me, but those who have come from around Alaska and around Washington, D.C.

So I thank the Native Village of Savoonga, the City of Savoonga, the Bering Straits School District, Kawerak, the Norton Sound Health Corporation, the Bering Straits Housing Authority, and the Association of Alaska Housing Authorities for working with us to make this hearing possible.

I also want to acknowledge and thank one of my former staff people and a good friend of mine, Megan Alvanna-Stimpfle, for her help. She is truly one of this generation's upcoming leaders. Her

support and guidance not only here in Savoonga but throughout the region is just greatly appreciated. So Megan, it was wonderful to be welcomed by you when we got off the plane.

So here we are, back in Savoonga. I was here last year when we had the ribbon-cutting for the clinic. It was at that time that I was with Barbara and she once again started the day's festivities and formalities off with a blessing. That was an important milestone, last year. To be here today, to talk about the issue of housing, is again an important milestone.

My very fist trip to Savoonga, some of you may remember. This was in, either 2003 or 2004, and I had asked the Secretary of Education, Secretary Rodney Paige, to come with me to Alaska to see and understand some of the educational issues that we face here in this State. Because he wasn't very enthusiastic about allowing Alaskans to have a waiver with No Child Left Behind, you'll remember that was when the rules required that if your school didn't perform well then you had to be allowed to attend a school that was your next closest school.

So in other words, if the school here in Savoonga did not meet adequately yearly progress, your students, Jacob, you would have been attending Nome High School every day. Because that was what the law was going to require if this school failed to meet adequately yearly progress.

So we brought the Secretary over here to understand that maybe in Alaska, things are a little different. And he saw that. But the other thing that that Secretary saw when he visited with the teachers and the principals, he realized that housing is a huge issue. The principal at the time, I don't recall his name, was from Kansas. He said his wife was back in Kansas. I said, why is your wife in Kansas? He said, well, I don't have a place to live here. I said, where do you live? He opened up a door there in the school. It was an old broom closet, and that was where the principal lived.

Now, I've just met your principal, I've just Gaetano, I think the fourth. I can't imagine you and your young family living in the broom closet here at the school. And yet I visited with the elementary school teacher, the second grade teacher at the time, I said, where do you live? She pulled out a gym mat that she slept on at night in her classroom.

That really struck the Secretary. He said, how can we educate our kids if our teachers don't have a place to live? It was at that time that we embarked on a very aggressive effort to build out teacher housing around the State. We've made some good headway working with our partners, but we know that still have a way to go there.

So I share that story with you because I think it's important that that interaction that I had about 10 or 11 years ago here in Savoonga has left an impression on me with regard to the need to address housing in Alaska, housing in rural Alaska, housing in our Native villages. Because if we can't provide safe, affordable housing that is acceptable, then it is going to be very difficult to keep the professionals and keep your families here.

So we have a very significant panel of individuals to speak to us this morning, to testify. Before I introduce them, I would like to recognize the staff of the Indian Affairs Committee that have

joined us here in Savoonga. We have Mike Andrews, behind me, who is the Majority Staff Director and Chief Counsel for the Committee. He has had an opportunity to be in many Alaskan communities, but this is his first visit out here to St. Lawrence Island.

He is joined by Jacqueline Bisille. She is Policy Advisor for the Committee. We have Jennifer Romero, who is the Minority Staff Director and Chief Counsel for the Committee. She is from Santa Clara Pueblo, from New Mexico. She is joined by Anthony Sedillo, also from New Mexico. He is a Senior Policy Advisor for the Committee. And then I have my two staff people who help me on the Indian Affairs Committee, Ben Mellotte, is Tlingit from Yakutat, and Eric Reamers, Yupik, from Iliamna. They have been strong advisors for me on my Indian Affairs Committee. I'm thankful that they are here as well.

I also want to take a moment and introduce my Rural Affairs Director-Coordinator, Deborah Vo. Deborah is from St. Marys. She has had an opportunity to be with me on many different occasions. Hannah Rae is down here in front with the camera. I'd also like to recognize Senator Sullivan's staff, Kate Wildermuth. Kate is know to many of you and has been doing great work for Senator Sullivan.

So today we have an opportunity again to take testimony on overcrowding. Our witnesses will lay out the issues, the problems, the statistics, and hopefully some solutions. We know that there's a great deal of work to be done in this area, and what you can share with us is so important.

So let's start with a few statistics, very quickly. At the beginning of this year, there was an Alaska Statewide Housing Assessment. It really pinpoints the extent of the problem in rural Alaska, particularly in our Alaska Native villages. The report states that in rural Alaska, we have nearly 50 percent of all households in some areas that are experiencing overcrowding. From a national perspective, overcrowding affected 16 percent of American Indian and Alaska Native households in tribal areas and 10 percent in urban areas. When you compare this with the rest of U.S. households, only 2 percent of all U.S. households are overcrowded.

Here in this region, in the Bering Straits region, one of the highest overcrowding rates in the State. It is estimated 27 percent of households are overcrowded or severely overcrowded. The rate in the Bering Strait region is more than 4.3 times the statewide average and more than 8.3 times the national average.

I think it is important for us to recognize that what we will hear today is what you live with. But it is not the norm throughout the State, and certainly not throughout the Country.

I think it is also important that when we look to these definitions of how do you define overcrowding that oftentimes, it is an expression of what is actually homelessness, with families taking in relatives or community members who otherwise could not find affordable housing options. I just had a conversation with about a half dozen people as we were coming in. And that is just what happens here, even though you are an adult and you have your own family, you are living with your parents, you are living with aunts and uncles, you are living with multiple generations.

I hope this morning we will also hear about the high cost of housing. The report, the housing assessment, shows what we all know, that costs are too high, nearly 80,000 cost-burdened families who are spending over 30 percent of their income on housing alone throughout the State. In addition, our stock of housing is deteriorating. We are not keeping pace with expected population growth.

So again, statistics that you all know, but within our State, 18 percent of all Alaska Native households lack plumbing, 15 percent lack kitchen facilities. An estimated 465 homes in the Bering Strait region do not have access to running water or sewer. We have five communities within the region, Stebbins, Teller, Wales, Diomede, and Shishmaref, completely underserved.

Again, we know that these figures are not exclusive to Alaska. All across Indian Country, we see problems with access to quality and affordable housing. Again, the opportunity to put this information on the record, so that not only the community hears this, the members of the Indian Affairs staff hear this, but remember what happens when a written record is created. That means it is then available for the entire Senate, for all of Congress. It is a public record that we are creating here.

So the process this morning is, I will introduce each of our witnesses. They will have an opportunity to provide their testimony. We have asked them to try to keep their oral comments to about five minutes. But their entire written statement will be included as part of the record, as mine will be.

So hopefully, this is an opportunity for you not to feel scripted and stick to your written words, but speak to us about the extent of the issues, the reality of what it means to be in a community and a village and a region where overcrowding is so pervasive. For those who have joined us in the audience, this is not going to be an opportunity for you to share your stories through an open mic, but directly after the hearing, we are going to have a community lunch, and there will be an opportunity to engage in dialogue not only with myself and the staff, but the staff from HUD. So hopefully this exchange will continue.

After each of the witnesses have given their testimony, I will proceed with a series of questions, so that we have good discussion to place on the record. So at this time, we will proceed with introductions and then testimony. Because we are operating without the benefit of a mic, we will have the recorder being passed down and around, so we can get the comments on the record. I would ask each of you to try to speak as loudly as you can, so that all can hear.

We are going to lead the testimony off this morning with Mr. Greg Stucky. Greg is the Administrator for the Office of Native American Programs, with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), based out of Anchorage. Of course you all know our friend and the honorable President of the Native village of Savoonga, Mr. Delbert Pungowiyi. Delbert has been a friend and very helpful with us as we have set up this hearing.

We had hoped that we would have Myron Kingeekuk, the Mayor of Savoonga. Myron is on travel. We all understand what that means, so he won't be able to participate today. But we have Christopher Kolerok, known to so many of us. Christopher is the Presi-

dent and CEO of the Bering Straits Regional Housing Authority. Following Chris will we have your principal here at Hogarth Kingeekuk Memorial School here in Savoonga, Mr. Gaetano Brancaleone. It's wonderful to have you here. We appreciate your leadership at the school.

Following Gaetano, we will have Brianne Gologergen, who is the Savoonga Clinic Manager, with Norton Sound Health Corporation. Wonderful to have you here.

Following Gaetano's testimony, we are going to have a special voice from the young people, a student who was selected to speak today. So Jacob Iya, we will welcome your comments as well. So we have a good panel here this morning. I would ask you, Mr. Stuckey, if you want to begin. I am going to be less formal in this hearing and call people by their first names, so hopefully you don't take offense at my informality. I feel this is certainly a place that we should have good discussion while we place this important information on the record.

So Greg, if you would like to lead the Committee off. Again, thank you for being here.

[The prepared statement of Senator Murkowski follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. LISA MURKOWSKI, U.S. SENATOR FROM ALASKA

Good morning. The Committee will come to order, as we begin our field hearing on "Overcrowded Housing and the Impacts on American Indians and Alaska Natives."

I believe this is the first-ever congressional field hearing held in Savoonga. I'm very glad to be here today to chair it, and very glad you all could be here today for it.

I want to start by thanking all who helped make this one-of-a-kind hearing possible. I thank the community of Savoonga for being such great hosts and welcoming us into your homes and school. I want to thank the Native Village of Savoonga, the City of Savoonga, the Bering Straits School District, Kawerak, the Norton Sound Health Corporation, the Bering Straits Housing Authority, and the Association of Alaska Housing Authorities for working with us to make this hearing possible.

I also want to thank one of my former staff members, Megan Alvanna-Stimpfle, for her help. She is part of the next generation of Alaska Native leaders and I couldn't be more proud of her.

It's great to be back here in Savoonga. I'll never forget the first time I visited here. It was 2009 and I flew out here with Education Secretary Arne Duncan. This was just after he released his proposed reform of the No Child Left Behind Act and I took him out here to show him that his one-size-fits-all approach wasn't going to work in Alaska. I also visited your beautiful Island last year, when I was here for the opening of your new health clinic. The Norton Sound Health Corporation, along with local community members, worked so hard to secure funding for new clinics both here in Savoonga and for your neighboring village of Gambell. I was honored to be a part of the opening ceremony because I know that the new clinics will provide invaluable improvements in providing high quality, modern healthcare. Again, I appreciate the work of the community leaders in providing such a crucial service for their members.

We have a very significant panel of individuals who will testify this morning. But, before we begin, I would like to recognize the staff of the Indian Affairs Committee that have joined us here in Savoonga. We have Mike Andrews, who is the Majority Staff Director and Chief Counsel for the Committee. He is joined by Jacqueline Bisille, who is a Policy Advisor for the Committee. We also have Jennifer Romero, who is the Minority Staff Director and Chief Counsel for the Committee. She is joined by Anthony Sedillo, who is a Senior Policy Advisor for the Committee. I'm happy they could make the trip and I hope this will be an opportunity to better understand some of the challenges we face in Alaska.

So today, we have an opportunity to take testimony on overcrowding and the impact it has our indigenous population. Our witnesses will lay out the issues, the problems, the statistics, and hopefully the solutions to these problems. We have many dedicated and qualified people working to improve the housing conditions and

lives of American Indians and Alaska Natives. However, there is still a lot of work to be done.

Earlier this year I reviewed the 2018 Alaska Statewide Housing Assessment. It illustrates how much work there is to be done, particularly in rural Alaska, where the population is predominantly Alaska Native. The report states that in rural Alaska, we still have a huge issue with overcrowding—with nearly 50 percent of all households in some areas experiencing overcrowding.

Overcrowding affected 16 percent of American Indian and Alaska Native households in tribal areas and 10 percent in urban areas. In comparison, only two percent of all U.S. households experienced overcrowding.

The overcrowding rate here in the Bering Strait region is one of the highest in the state, with an estimated 27 percent of households being classified as overcrowded or severely overcrowded. The rate of overcrowding in the Bering Strait region is more than 4.3 times the statewide average and more than 8.3 times the national average.

I think it is important to point out that overcrowding in Indian Country is often the expression of what is actually homelessness, with families taking in relatives or community members who otherwise could not find affordable housing options. It is not uncommon for a household in rural Alaska to have multiple generations or multiple families living in them.

The report also showed that costs are still too high—with nearly 80,000 cost-burdened families who are spending over 30 percent of their income on housing alone. In addition, our stock of housing is deteriorating and we are not keeping pace with expected population growth.

The statistics for housing quality are particularity daunting for Alaska, with 18 percent of all Alaska Native households lacking plumbing and 15 percent lacking kitchen facilities. An estimated 465 homes in the Bering Strait region do not have access to running water or sewer, with five communities-Stebbins, Teller, Wales, Diomede, and Shishmaref-remaining completely underserved.

I am aware these figures are not exclusive to Alaska. All across Indian Country we are seeing the problem with access to quality and affordable housing. That is why housing in rural and Native American communities must be part of the discussion in the 115th Congress.

What we will do this morning is hear from each of the witnesses to add to this discussion. I urge the witnesses to try to keep your opening testimony to about five minutes each. But, we're not going to cut you off, either, since this is important testimony that will be entered into the congressional record.

For those who are joining us in the audience, we won't have an open mic, but directly following the hearing, you will have an opportunity to engage in dialogue with myself, the staff of Indian Affairs, and the staff from HUD. So if you have any questions to ask us, feel free to ask them at the community meeting directly following this hearing.

After each of our witnesses have given their testimony, I will proceed with a series of questions, to facilitate a good constructive discussion going back and forth.

So with that, I'll introduce each of the witnesses—

- MR. GREG STUCKEY, Administrator, Office of Native American Programs, Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Anchorage, AK
- MR. DELBERT PUNGOWIYI, President, the Native Village of Savoonga, Savoonga, AK
- THE HONORABLE MYRON KINGEEKUK, Mayor, City of Savoonga, Savoonga, AK
- MS. BRIANNE P. GOLOGERGEN, Savoonga Clinic Manager, Norton Sound Health Corporation, Savoonga, AK
- MR. GAETANO BRANCALEONE III, Principal, Hogarth Kingeekuk Sr. Memorial School, Savoonga, AK
- MR. CHRISTOPHER KOLEROK, President/CEO, the Bering Straits Regional Housing Authority, Nome, AK

I want to remind the witnesses that your full written testimony will be made a part of the official hearing record.

STATEMENT OF GREG STUCKEY, ADMINISTRATOR, ALASKA OFFICE OF NATIVE AMERICAN PROGRAMS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOMPENT

Mr. STUCKEY. Thank you, Senator Murkowski, for this opportunity to discuss overcrowded housing and the impacts on American Indian and Alaska Natives and the programs administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, specifically authorized by the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996, referred to as NAHASDA.

As the Administrator for HUD's Alaska Office of Native American Programs and formerly the Administrator-Advisor for AONAP, I have had the opportunity to visit and work with communities to learn first-hand about the issues and challenges that 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.

I also had the pleasure and honor to work as a tribal administrator for my children's tribe at Chilkoot Indian Association in Haines, Alaska, Southeast Alaska, for almost six years.

Far too many families live in unacceptable circumstances, as we heard from Senator Murkowski's testimony just moments ago, and face a future that lacks access to educational and economic opportunity. To put this into greater perspective, in 2006 to 2010, AIAN people in large tribal areas were more than seven times as likely to live in housing that was considered overcrowded. As we heard from those statistics, here in the Bering Straits region, it's almost nine times the national average.

I was just provided some information from Kawerak that here in Savoonga it is 20 times the national average. So the impact of overcrowding in Alaska is certainly more severe than in other places.

HUD is aware of the housing assessment by Alaska Housing Finance Corp. And in that assessment, it talks about, in order to eradicate overcrowding and match the population growth of our communities by 2025, we need to increase the production of new units by 90 percent. In order for HUD to put more resources on the table, the Office of Native American Programs is hard at work crafting two notices of funding availabilities. The first one that is going to come out is called Indian Community Development Block Grant. We expect that to be published in the fall of 2018. I think September or October.

Then our new program, the competitive $100,000 for Indian Housing Block Grant Funding, we are working hard to have that notice crafted in the winter of 2018, which is more like December, January 2019. While the HUD Reform Act precludes me from giving the details of that NOFA prior to its publication, we will, it will reflect the Congressional directives in that Act, namely that in making awards, HUD will one, consider need and administrative capacity, and two, give priority to projects that will spur construction and rehabilitation. HUD will also give the maximum time to our tribal partners to respond to those notices.

One other project is happening in ONAP that I have awareness of but not a deep understanding. It is a project to increase the amount of funding available through our Title VI loan guarantee program. So we are working on a project that will, one, allow those

resources to be used sooner in the Federal fiscal year, and approximately add 40 percent more funding to that pot of funds with no more appropriations. So that project is something else that HUD is working on to try to bring more resources to deal with the overcrowding issue that we are dealing with here in Alaska.

I am going to stop my comments, because I want to spend more time having a discussion, as, Senator Murkowski, you suggest. I will conclude my testimony.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Stuckey follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GREG STUCKEY, ADMINISTRATOR, ALASKA OFFICE OF NATIVE AMERICAN PROGRAMS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOMPENT

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 County.

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 finds 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.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Greg. Again, your full statement will be incorporated as part of the record. We do appreciate it, that is good information you provided. We will follow up with questions.

Delbert? Welcome. Thank you for welcoming us to your community.

STATEMENT OF HON. DELBERT PUNGOWIYI, PRESIDENT, NATIVE VILLAGE OF SAVOONGA

Mr. PUNGOWIYI. The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, I thank you for coming out here and I thank you for hearing our people's voice. I thank you for coming out here heavy. So I start my testimony.

My name is Delbert Pungowiyi. I serve as President for the Native Village of Savoonga. Our tribe serves over 900 tribal members, with our population continuing to grow with each generation. I was born in 1959, the same year Alaska established statehood with the United States. There was no electricity back then, and people still used dog teams. I was raised by my grandparents, who instilled in me our ancestral ways.

A year and a half ago, Sue Steinacher and Brian Wilson, who was the Housing President for the Coalition for Alaska, Chris Kolerok and I were invited to the Fairbanks Housing Coalition meeting. I was invited to sit on the rural panel and had a chance to speak before the Governor's Council. I am very proud of that. I believe that was a moment that we got heard from Washington. And I thank you for hearing our crisis out here.

At that meeting, I spoke of the housing crisis we have in Savoonga. That was several years back, when they did the overcrowdedness. There were 75 families within families and growing. The last housing that was built here in our community was 11 years ago. Eleven years later, now we have six units here. The cost of shipping, Chris will hit on that, to get the material out here is very expensive. The high cost of living on our island here is, in my opinion, astronomical because of our remoteness. I have said this

before, we are so remote out here, our nearest neighbor is Russia, only less than 40 miles away.

I spoke of the living conditions, there were some health inspectors who, in fixing some of these homes, would be condemned for living in, for health issues. The trauma that was asked about the children in overcrowded homes and the living conditions, it is not just the children that are going through trauma. It is the adults as well. I articulated into this, the social issues of our communities in the State. And I speak on behalf of all of rural Alaska on this, with our brothers and sisters in Gambell, as well.

The social issues that come with the housing crisis is all tied with our economic situation. We all know that Alaska has the highest rate of suicide in the Nation, Alaska Natives have the highest rate of suicide in the Nation. That is from, we have high-schoolers graduating, but they have nothing to look forward to. The depression, being deprived, and hopelessness, which many turn to alcohol and drug abuse. Ultimately, the sad one is the suicide. They ultimately give up their lives.

We have the highest rate of suicide in the Nation, and yet we are the minority, 16 percent Alaska Natives. Mike Dugan, who did a story on the research on suicide prevention in Alaska, in Anchorage Daily News, the State was being hit hard with suicide at that time. And he researched 20 years back, his report was that for the 20 years the Federal Government, and the State of Alaska, spent millions of dollars in suicide prevention, and the numbers have not changed. Something different needs to be done. That's why I articulated our housing crisis and our economic crisis that we are in. In all our social issues in our communities, we are in a crisis.

And so with that being said, I think I would like to ask the Senator and Tribal Affairs, my heart goes out to all the region in the State. But I do believe that Savoonga and Gambell deserve special attention. As you will hear in our military grievance, the sacrifice we have given to our Nation, that this is long overdue. We believe that we deserve special attention, especially for the high cost of living out here, being so remote.

So with that being said, I will end my comment there. I thank you. You have a beautiful heart. You heard us and you are here. I thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Pungowiyi follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. DELBERT PUNGOWIYI, PRESIDENT, NATIVE VILLAGE OF SAVOONGA

It is my distinct honor to welcome you to our homeland, Saint Lawrence Island. My name is Delbert Pungowiyi and I serve as the President of the Native Village of Savoonga. Our tribe serves roughly 900 tribal members, with our population continuing to grow with each generation. I was born in 1959, the same year that Alaska established Statehood with the United States. There was no electricity back then, and people still used dog teams. I was raised by my grandparents, who instilled in me our ancestral ways.

We have governed ourselves on Saint Lawrence Island for over 10,000 years. The location of our island in the Bering Strait provides access to marine resources including whales, walrus, and seals that provide not only sustenance and food security, but give great meaning and relevance to where we live. The wealth of our ocean and lands is immeasurable in economic terms. Our way of life is governed according to the laws of our creator of how we are to live on this earth. We are raised to take nothing more, then what mother earth provides us for sustenance.

Yet history has delivered upon us a complex reality. The presence of the military during the Cold War on our Island, as well as failed federal Indian policies of assimilation from a generation past has delivered a complex governance arrangement between our lands as managed by our corporation and society as governed by the tribe. Historical trauma imposed by systematic changes to our way of life, and lack of ability to comprehensive govern ourselves has left our community with rates of substance abuse that impact both the fundamental health of our community and economic productivity. It is from the lens of these challenges that we must understand and acknowledge in order to identify and create pathways to homeownership.

You will hear today several perspectives, from our educators, and health providers the crisis situation our families face -a crisis that has remained silent for far too long. Let me use this opportunity however to speak generally for those of us living in rural Alaska. In January 2017 the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco published a rural homeownership guide that highlighted the most overcrowded regions in rural Alaska face a rate 12 times the national average and a $2 billion capital need for urgent improvements to existing homes. While we are extremely thankful for the work of Bering Strait Regional Housing Authority, we recognize that housing authorities in Alaska are vastly underfunded to meet the demands they face.

The 20 federally recognized tribes of the Bering Strait region have prioritized addressing the housing crisis our communities face. The Association of Alaska Housing Authorities reported in a 2014 study that over 20% of homes in our region are overcrowded with multiple families living under one roof. The rate of overcrowding here in Savoonga is the highest of any census area at 61%. Over 50% of our population lives below the federal poverty line, according to the American Community Survey's United States Census.

In 2015, we faced an economic disaster, as declared by the State of Alaska. With increasing changes to the Arctic climate and a lack of stable sea ice, our hunters were left without any access to our main food source provided by the spring walrus migration. The lack of access to walrus created a food security crisis and we are thankful the State of Alaska declared an economic disaster. The declaration did not result in any meaningful assistance to our starving families, however we are thankful some food provisions were provided. This unfortunate event allowed the tribe to determine that 75 families in our community face overcrowding in the home.

The state of overcrowding in our homes are felt in pervasive ways that impact the very will to live for every generation within a home. The level of hopelessness and despair has left us with devastating social consequences of substance abuse, and suicide. I am not proud to report that the State of Alaska experiences one of the highest rates of suicide in the United States. We must work to identify the magnitude of need for home investment on Saint Lawrence Island, and establish pathways for our young families. Let us hope this is the beginning of creating new opportunity. New opportunity and pathways for the next generation. Our purpose and will to live is within our way of life.

We recognize that it will take the collective action of multiple organization both locally and regionally as well as an examination of the barriers and programs that define our reality on the island. I strongly encourage that we examine the policies and programs that will reduce the cost of raw materials for home construction, invest in workforce development and increase youth employment, as well as advance place-based and culturally relevant design of our homes. I would like to make the following recommendations:

- Our tribe, as the primary government responsible for the well-being of our members has barely enough base funding to operate day to day. The BIA's small and needy tribe allocation must be appropriated at $300,000 adjusted with the consumer price index.
- Oversight and reform of the bypass mail program to improve the delivery of goods to St. Lawrence Island. While we appreciate the support of the program, an evaluation of logistics routes (hub to village) is absolutely necessary. Prior to the program direct cargo flights landed here in Savoonga, and it deliver a snow machine or four wheeler it roughly cost $300. As cargo was rerouted to Nome, we experienced the increase an costs: $300 to Nome; and an additional $650 from Nome to Savoonga. Re-evaluating the bypass mail program will go a long way in reducing the cost of goods to our communities. We strongly urge you to convene a private sector dialogue to reduce the cost of goods to rural communities.
- Create a multi-pronged strategy to improve and weatherize existing housing stock. Encourage Ruralcap to spend more funding in rural Alaska.
- We are known for our harsh climate conditions, with hurricane force winds. Our homes must be designed to suit our environment. The homes of our ancestors were completely weather proof. They "lived under the skin of our mother." As we begin to determine pathways forward to address the housing crisis, it is imperative that we innovate from Yupik technology and design. We would invite and strongly encourage investment funds to partner with designing homes relevant for our environment and way of life.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Delbert, thank you. I appreciate your raising so many issues. We all know that housing is more than just a structure, and how it impacts the social issues and the well-being of our families is important. I look forward to questions.

Chris, thank you for being here and for your leadership.

STATEMENT OF CHRISTOPHER KOLEROK, PRESIDENT/CEO, BERING STRAITS REGIONAL HOUSING AUTHORITY

Mr. KOLEROK. Thank you. I would like to thank Chairman Hoeven, Vice Chairman Udall, Senator Murkowski and the honorable members of the Committee for the opportunity to share with you today.

I will summarize my written testimony in the interest of time. I am the President and CEO of the Bering Straits Regional Housing Authority, the legislative chair of the Association of Alaska

Housing Authorities and a board member for the Alaska Coalition on Housing and Homelessness.

All of this has given me the experience to tell you that housing is the nexus of a healthy and economically fulfilled life. Performing well in school, holding down a good job, even our physical health, are all connected to a safe and sanitary and affordable home.

Overcrowded housing is how homelessness is manifest in our villages. Unsheltered homelessness in our villages likely means death here for 8 out of the 12 months of the year. Rather than let someone die, the generous and kind people in our villages double, triple or quadruple up in homes, living in severely overcrowded conditions. So too is living in substandard housing, how our homelessness is displayed. People in Anchorage, Denver or Miami would choose unsheltered homelessness rather than the extremely substandard conditions some of our people face here.

For some national context, HUD's assessment of American Indian and Alaska Native housing estimates that we need 60,000 to 80,000 houses now to alleviate overcrowding. In the Bering Straits outside of Nome, the overcrowding rate is 37 percent. Nineteen percent of that are homes being classified as severely overcrowded. And that term is woefully inadequate.

HUD defines severely overcrowded as 1.5 persons per room. In all of our villages, I have heard stories of families that have multiple generations and multiple families sharing a house due to the lack of available housing. During community meetings, we have been confronted with the heartbreaking stories of 21 people sharing a small three-bedroom home. That's 21 people in a space that most Alaskans and most Americans might call a starter home.

We know from studies in the circumpolar north that children in overcrowded homes perform worse in school, are more likely to be held back in grades, experience respiratory and skin infections at a higher rate than children in homes that are not overcrowded. Our children are literally physically harmed by the overcrowded conditions in which they live.

When 21 people share a home, the occupants must sleep in shifts. Out of a great love for their children and belief that education may help them build a future, adults in a home like this will stay up all night while the children sleep in whatever beds, couches or even on the floor, so that they can go to school the next day. For these people who sleep the day shift, there is no chance for them to hold a regular job, which then creates its own self-reinforcing economic cycle.

When someone in a 21-person home experiences substance abuse, 21 other people experience substance abuse. Substance abuse induced violence, theft or emotional abuse will affect every other person in that home.

So too is the overcrowding affecting housing shortages and homelessness in our regional and urban centers. People in villages such as Savoonga are pushed out of their villages due to the lack of housing. They are pulled to Nome or Anchorage by simple economics. The GDP per capita in the 2010 census in Savoonga was $7,000, versus $37,000 in Anchorage.

There is a migratory link between village regional hub and urban centers that people regularly traverse, moving from Gambell to

Nome to Anchorage and back. People with nowhere to live will attempt to move to Nome for the jobs. There they will run into high rental prices and reduced social safety nets. After working full time and barely affording their rent, they may then try to move to Anchorage in search of more affordable housing, and again, decreasing their social safety net. In Anchorage, with fewer family members, their distance from homelessness may be just $50 on their rent payment.

Housing development is handicapped by stagnant funds and rising costs. The Indian Housing Block Grant this year was approximately 28 percent lower than in 1997, when we adjust for inflation. An inflation-depleted Indian Housing Block Grant would be a tragedy in its own right, but construction costs are increasing. I have construction data for housing units built here in 1997 and costs have nearly tripled, versus the official inflation factor that the Bureau of Labor Statistics calculates as 58 percent.

Compounding this, there are fewer contractors responding to RFPs now than there were in 2015. We do have some success, however, owing to the great power of the central idea of NAHASDA, which is self-determination rather than Washington determination. My construction manager who works for me full time is building to my standards and his standards. Our homes we are now building are 50-year homes. We have deliberately made the decision to build these homes to out-perform the older series of homes built, whether by drilling down to bedrock to drive our piles or utilizing structurally insulated panels. These homes, right out here, are built using Alaskan-sourced materials. The panel manufacturer is located in Wasilla.

In October of 2017, these homes were burning five gallons of stove oil every other week. We estimate that those homes will burn about 220 gallons per year on an annual basis, versus our old homes that can sometimes burn 100 gallons per month.

Senator Murkowski, thank you for being here. Thank you for this opportunity. But I need to tell you that we desperately need the Indian Housing Block Grant to be adequately funded. That funding needs to account for the inflation that's taken place over the last 20 years.

Thank you very much for being here.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Kolerok follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CHRISTOPHER KOLEROK, PRESIDENT/CEO, BERING STRAITS REGIONAL HOUSING AUTHORITY

Good morning Chairman Hoeven, Vice-Chairman Udall, and distinguished members of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. Thank you for the opportunity to appear today as the Committee hears testimony on Overcrowded Housing and the Impacts on American Indians and Alaska Natives.

My name is Chris Kolerok, and I have the privilege to serve as the President and CEO of the Bering Straits Regional Housing Authority (BSRHA). I am also Cup'ik Eskimo, a tribal member of the Native Village of Mekoryuk. BSRHA is the regional housing authority in western Alaska and the Tribally Designated Housing Entity for 17 tribes. The Bering Straits region is approximately the size of Maryland, with 17 villages, accessible only by air year-round and by barge during the Summer months.

This field hearing is taking place in a prescient location, overcrowded housing, and severely overcrowded housing, are prevalent in Savoonga, and all of the villages in the Bering Straits. Overcrowded housing is not limited to the Bering Straits region, but is common across Alaska and throughout Indian Country.

Overcrowded Housing in the Bering Straits, Alaska and the United States

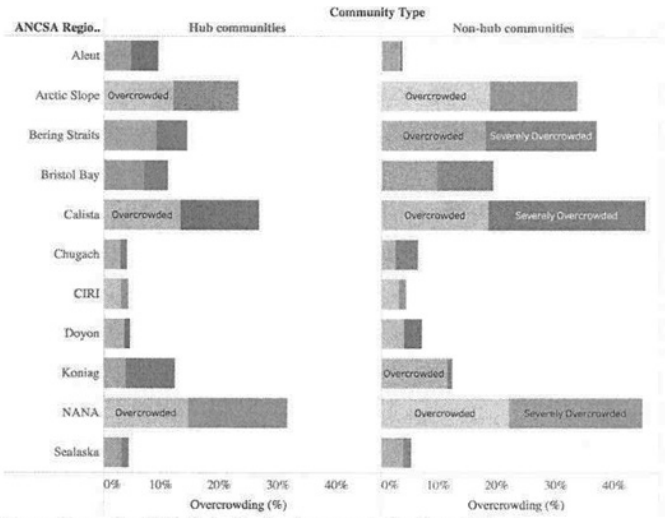
For American Indians and Alaska Natives, overcrowded housing is a manifestation of what would be unsheltered homelessness in other parts of the country. The Department of Housing and Urban Development's report *Housing Needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives in Tribal Areas* published in January 2017 estimated between 42,000 and 85,000 Native Americans were doubled up, a term to describe a person living with friends or family to avoid homelessness because they have no residence. To alleviate overcrowding and replace substandard units in Indian country, the report estimated 68,000 housing units were needed in tribal areas.

On a statewide level, the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, the State's housing finance agency, published a housing assessment of statewide and regional housing needs in January 2018 titled *2018 Alaska Housing Assessment*. The assessment found that some Alaskans regions experience overcrowding at 12 times that of the national average. AHFC estimated that 16,107 housing units would need to be constructed to accommodate the existing population in overcrowded housing.

In Savoonga, unsheltered homelessness would lead to death during the fierce winter weather. Rooted in a close-knit culture and deep familial links, many families prefer to house people in need, and live in severe overcrowding, rather than let individuals risk certain death if they are unsheltered.

The terms overcrowded and severely overcrowded are inadequate to address the situation in rural Alaska. HUD defines overcrowded as 1.5 people per room in a housing unit. During informational meeting, I have heard anecdotes in more than one of our communities of 3-bedroom homes that were housing 21 people. These 3-bedroom homes are often in the range of 1,100 to 1,300 square feet. These conditions are extremely overcrowded, and represent a detriment to health and economic well-being of those who are forced to live in such conditions.

The scale of overcrowded housing is largest in the areas that are in the most need, the non-hub communities, which are villages that do not serve as transportation and commercial centers supporting smaller or surrounding villages. In the Bering Straits, overcrowded and severely overcrowded housing rates are approximately 37 percent, well above the approximately 3 percent overcrowded rate of the national average.



*Alaska Housing Finance Corporation 2018 Alaska Housing Assessment. Graphic available at https://www.ahfc.us/efficiency/research-information-center/alaska-housing-assessment/2018-housing-assessment/ancsa-overcrowding/

Impacts of Overcrowded and Substandard Housing on American Indians and Alaska Natives

The Institute of Social and Economic Research prepared a report for the Association of Alaska Housing Authorities titled "Developing Social Outcomes of Inadequate Housing in Alaska" identified many impacts to overcrowded housing. The report identified several areas where overcrowding negatively impacted occupants.

What is particularly troubling is how much of the available research was able to show negative effects on the most vulnerable of our population: children. By way of summary, the areas are outlined below:

- Health impacts: multiple studies confirmed that overcrowding and poor quality of housing in the Canadian arctic is related to increased respiratory and skin infections in children.
- Educational impacts: children in overcrowded homes display more behavioral problems in school and have more conflict with their parents. One study found that children in overcrowded homes achieve lower educational attainment. Another study found that even controlling for family size, the overcrowding of a home led to higher rates of being held back in school. In subject specific studies, overcrowding decreased reading and math scores.

These studies conducted in the Canadian arctic and across the globe present serious challenges we must confront if we are to provide children in rural villages a chance at a healthy and productive life.

Overcrowded housing and the lack of housing are interchangeable conditions in rural Alaska. The lack of safe, sanitary and affordable housing threatens the survival of Native cultures and the villages and towns many Alaska Natives call home. Tribal communities that lack decent housing often have difficulty or an outright inability to attract essential professionals to live in their communities. Health care providers, law enforcement officer and educators need safe, sanitary and affordable housing to assume their jobs, and without that housing those professionals will not move to a community. A community without adequate health care, law enforcement and education cannot survive, much less thrive.

The Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium conducted a study on home ventilation improvements. Though overcrowding was not a data set collected in the study, we know that having a more people living in a home contributes to increased moisture and can reduce the indoor air quality, which is what the study measured. There were 63 homes with 214 children in eight villages, located in Southwest Alaska that had home modifications. One year after the modifications were completed, the results were astounding: a decrease in hospitalization went from 10 cases to 0; clinic visits decreased from 36 to 12; and, school absences decreased from 18 to 3. These numbers are a testament to how the quality of housing directly affects the educational attainment and health quality of our children, elders and community members.

Housing instability also impacts the health of our communities. Housing instability can be defined as homelessness, overcrowding, transiency, and high cost burden that many families' bear such as the cost of energy. Housing instability has health consequences, including: reduced access to care, mental distress, difficulty sleeping, and depression. In children, housing instability puts them at a higher risk for: developmental delays, low weight, and poor health overall. For youth, the consequences result in: behavioral and emotional problems, increased teenage pregnancy, increased drug use, increased rates of depression, and increased probability of using emergency rooms for routine care.

Children who live in affordable housing, when compared to children whose families are of comparable means but who do not have access to affordable housing: are 35 percent more likely to be classified as a "well" child; have a 28 percent lower risk of being seriously underweight; and are 19 percent less likely to be food insecure.

NAHASDA and the Indian Housing Block Grant

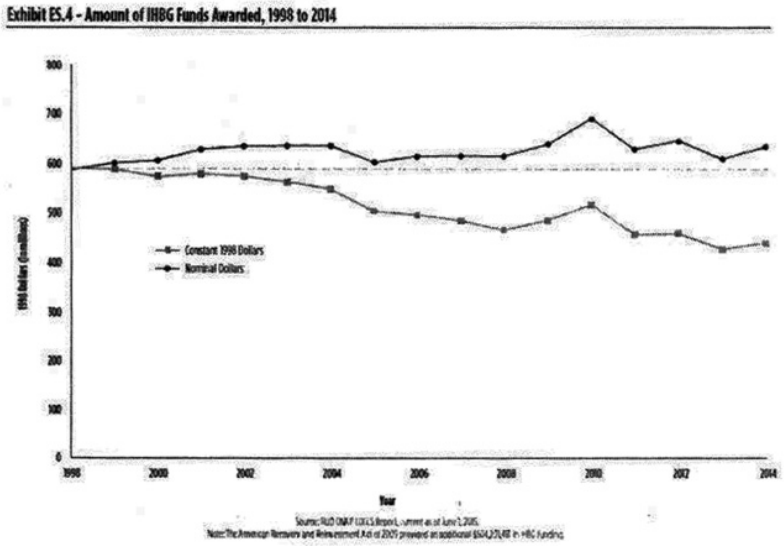
In 1996 Congress enacted the Native American Housing and Self Determination Act (NAHASDA), and established the Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG) as part of that act. This act acknowledged the Federal government's trust obligation to American Indians and Alaska Natives. NAHASDA also recognized the distinct affordable housing needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives, authorizing tribes to address their specific housing needs in the most effective ways. Prior to this, housing strategies were mandated by Federal officials sitting in offices thousands of miles away from the lands on which the homes were built.

As an example, homes in Savoonga and Gambell are built to withstand 120 mph wind gusts. Our winter storms require a different building standard and may not be needed in all of Alaska or other areas of the United States. These wind gusts may cause evacuations in other areas of the United States, however, evacuation due to extreme weather is not an option for the residents of Savoonga and Gambell. They must shelter in place and endure, as they have done for millennia.

The IHBG has been a powerful and positive tool for housing construction in tribal areas. However, the potential positive impact has been eroded by inflation since

NAHASDA's enactment in 1996. HUD's own study on native American housing needs states:

> "The tribes have demonstrated the capacity to construct and rehabilitate housing for low-income families at substantial levels under the NAHASDA framework."



The report also points out a major impediment to that work: the decline in purchasing power of the IHBG by approximately 1/3 by the year 2014. Without consistent and inflation-proofed appropriations, the IHBG will not allow tribes and Tribally Designated Housing Entities to develop housing that will keep pace with existing housing stock. Due to increased development costs, the amount of housing developed will likely decrease in the future. Construction costs are one area that outpace the overall inflation rate. While inflation included items and services that have declined in cost over time, the cost of construction has only increased. Actual costs of construction have nearly trebled, using data pulled from Bering Straits Regional Housing Authority's own construction records of housing developed in Savoonga in 1997 and 2017.

Addressing Overcrowded Housing

In order to address overcrowded housing, the largest single tool available to tribes and Tribally Designated Housing Entities is the Indian Housing Block Grant. Fully funding the IHBG with inflation proofed appropriations will allow more housing to be developed and help alleviate overcrowding in our communities. Though the IHBG and its flexibility is the most effective tool to allow tribes to design housing that meets their needs, there are other programs and public policy issues that can increase the amount of safe, sanitary and affordable housing for American Indians and Alaska Natives.

The Tribal HUD–VASH program is another tool that shows the great potential of agency collaboration to house Alaska Native veterans, which are among the largest per capita population that serve in America's armed forces. In Alaska, three (3) entities were selected to participate in the Tribal HUD–VASH pilot program in Alaska, AVCP Regional Housing Authority, serving the Yukon-Kuskokwim region of Southwest Alaska, Cool Inlet Housing Authority in Southcentral Alaska, and Tlingit Haida Regional Housing Authority in Southeast Alaska. The Tribal HUD–VASH pilot program allowed Alaska Native veterans who were homeless or at risk of being homeless to be served along with their families, rather than the stricter HUD VASH program requiring veterans be chronically homeless. This allowed veterans to receive housing assistance with their family members, increasing the population served and keeping family units together. The program is still a demonstration project which means it has some barriers that must be worked out with different entities involved in its implementation. Making this program permanent, and flexi-

ble for Alaska, will help the Federal government meet two of its most important obligations: taking care of its veterans after their service to our country, and its trust responsibility to Alaska Natives and American Indians.

Another issue that has the potential to impact housing Alaska is the accuracy of the decennial census count is of absolute importance for the Bering Straits, Alaska and all tribal areas in America. Tribal areas are often harder to count than urban, suburban or even the typical rural American census tract. Nowhere is this more true than Alaska. We have some of the most remote communities in the nation that have limited Internet accessibility. If Internet services are available, it is prohibitively expensive for most families and has very slow download speed to effectively complete an Internet-based census count. Additionally, many villages in Alaska are accessible only by air while the census count is happening, in the Bering Straits there is only 1 village connected to the regional transportation hub by road. However, this road is not guaranteed to be open during the winter. These topics should on the radar of the Census Bureau and sample counts should continue to occur in Alaska and across Indian Country. With Federal funding tied to population, an accurate count is of utmost importance to ensure hard to count census areas receive the formula funding to which they have access.

Finally, Federal regulators and officials should be paying attention to the needs of tribal areas and incorporating feedback when formulating policy. HUD's decision to update regulations on the Section 184 home loan guarantee program provides a case study for improvement to tribal consultation. HUD began its update by holding listening sessions, which it billed as tribal consultation. However, the listening sessions were not consultative. These sessions did not include information on what features of the Section 184 program had driven the need for update, or on what potential updates were proposed. Tribes were told the regulations would be pushed out through the Federal Register with an open comment period. This does not suggest that comments will be taken into consideration and certainly does not suggest a consultative and collaborative approach.

Conclusion

NAHASDA and the IHBG provide tribes a powerful tool to provide housing that is appropriate to their local conditions. It is the largest single tool tribal housing providers have to provide housing and alleviate overcrowded living conditions that hurt the education and health of American Indians and Alaska Natives. A fully funded IHBG is needed, now more than ever, to address the challenge of overcrowded housing in which too many American Indians and Alaska Natives are living.

Thank you to the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and the members of the Committee for the opportunity to appear before you today.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Chris. I appreciate very much the outlook on what has happened with increasing costs while at the same time, funds remain unfortunately at levels that are not sufficient. So thank you for raising that.

Gaetano, thank you for your leadership at the school.

STATEMENT OF GAETANO BRANCALEONE III, PRINCIPAL, HOGARTH KINGEEKUK SR. MEMORIAL SCHOOL

Mr. BRANCALEONE. Good morning, Senator Murkowski. Whanga aatqa Qawaagpaq. My name is Qawaagpaq, or Gaetano David Brancaleone, III. I am the principal of Hogarth Kingeekuk Sr. Memorial School in the Bering Straits school district. It is my fifth year working here as an administrator and my eighth year serving the community of Savoonga as a educator.

I appreciate this opportunity to testify before you today about overcrowded housing and specifically the impacts that it has on our students in the Bering Straits School District.Overcrowded housing can have a direct impact on the education of our students. It can deprive them of basic needs such as sleep, and can lead to concerns with sanitation, health, and basic quality of life.

When the basic needs of our students are not met, that can affect their overall well-being, as some have touched on already today, and their ability to focus on being successful at school. In our schools, that impact is reflected in low attendance rates, exhausted and sleeping students in class, emotional distress, and frequent illness and health-related absences.

In speaking with these students and families, trying to find ways to support them, some of the challenges that often come up in conversation are those about large numbers of people in one home, sleeping in shifts, as was mentioned before, the difficulty of sleeping when it is your shift because when it is your shift to sleep, it is someone else's turn to be awake. Sleeping in corners, sleeping on the bare floor, or sleeping on a pile of clothes, those are some of the challenges and obstacles that the families and students are dealing with that are difficult for the school to support. When students and families have to navigate the hardships of overcrowded housing on a daily basis, their ability to succeed at school is greatly hindered.

Housing is one of the fundamental needs of every family. As you noted before, and as has also been noted by some other witnesses, the lack of that housing is disproportionately felt in Native communities in bush Alaska. I think one of the major reasons for that is that in those rural locations, the cost of materials and the scarcity of trained tradesmen serve as an obstacle to building and maintaining safe, quality, and affordable housing. I urge the Committee to continue supporting any funding streams that sustain the building of new homes or the repair, weatherization and maintenance of existing structures.

I would strongly ask the Committee to develop or promote programs that support the training and certification of local tradesmen. I think building that capacity locally could greatly reduce the costs of constructing and maintaining adequate housing in rural locations, and could have a direct and lasting impact on the quality of life for rural populations, not only in regard to overcrowded housing, but just in regard to hope and purpose for the future.

The issue of overcrowded housing is one piece of the puzzle. We touched a little bit on some social issues and how different things play into that. I really encourage us to think, as we are dealing with symptoms, that we focus on long-term solutions that actually look at the source of some of these issues. So building local capacity and local healing I think are very important to consider when we are thinking about the steps we are going to be taking to address them.

I want to thank the Committee for taking the issue of overcrowded housing concerns seriously, and for coming out to Sivungaq to hear the needs of the people. I hope that your visit is an informative one that leads to action. Your actions on these matters, or lack thereof, have the potential to change lives forever. I trust you will not take that responsibility lightly. Igamsiqayugviikamsi. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Brancaleone follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GAETANO BRANCALEONE III, PRINCIPAL, HOGARTH KINGEEKUK SR. MEMORIAL SCHOOL

Good morning Senator Murkowski. Whanga aatqa Qawaagpaq (Gaetano Brancaleone III) and I am the Principal of Hogarth Kingeekuk Sr. Memorial School, within the Bering Strait School District in Western Alaska. It is my fifth year working as an administrator, and my eighth year serving the community of Savoonga as an educator. I appreciate this opportunity to testify before you today about Overcrowded Housing and the impacts that it has on our students in the Bering Strait School District.

Overcrowded housing has a direct impact on the education of our students. It can deprive them of basic needs such as sleep, and can lead to concerns with sanitation, health, and basic quality of life. In our schools, that impact is reflected in low attendance rates, exhausted and sleeping students in class, emotional distress, and frequent illness/health related absences. In speaking with these students and families, conversations about large numbers of people in one home, sleeping in shifts, the difficulty of sleeping when it is your shift because it is someone else's "turn" to be awake, sleeping in corners, sleeping on the bare floor, or sleeping on a pile of clothes are not uncommon. When students and families have to navigate the hardships of overcrowded housing on a daily basis, their ability to succeed at school is greatly hindered.

Housing is one of the fundamental needs of every family, and the lack of that housing is disproportionately felt in Native communities in bush Alaska. In these rural locations, the cost of materials and the scarcity of trained tradesmen serve as obstacles to building safe, quality, and affordable housing. I urge the Committee to continue supporting any funding streams that sustain the building of new homes or the repair and weatherization of existing structures. I would also ask the Committee to develop or promote programs that support the training and certification of local tradesmen. Building this capacity locally could greatly reduce the costs of constructing adequate housing in rural locations, and have a direct and lasting impact on the quality of life for rural populations.

I want to thank the Committee for taking the issue of overcrowded housing concerns seriously and for coming out to Sivungaq to hear the needs of the people. I hope that your visit is an informative one that leads to action. Your actions on these matters, or lack there of, have the potential to change lives forever. I trust you will not take that responsibility lightly. Igamsiqayugviikamsi.

Mr. BRANCALEONE. Is now when Jacob is going to speak?

Senator MURKOWSKI. If you would like to introduce him.

Mr. BRANCALEONE. Yes. This is Jacob Iya. He is a young leader in the village. He has done some pretty amazing things and has a great voice that he wants to share with you today.

STATEMENT OF JACOB IYA, STUDENT, HOGARTH KINGEEKUK SR. MEMORIAL SCHOOL

Mr. IYA. Welcome, ladies and gentlemen. The Native Village of Savoonga honors your visit to hear our voice.

As we all know, the future of this island is held within the hands of the children. Their development is beyond important for them to grow and become successful members within the community.

However, there are a variety of factors that hinder the children's chances of success, such as overcrowded and old houses, insufficient resources and illnesses that affect the overall health of the children. Some of these houses are so overcrowded that diseases, such as a cold, the flu and whooping coughs, can easily creep its way into the entire village if left untreated. When children become sick, they cannot go to school, thus less likely to become successful within the community.

Our shortage of housing is a harsh reality that we, as a village, deal with on a yearly basis. There are families that seriously need a new house, but are extremely humble, staying in a house with more than ten people with a house that was meant for five.

As Savoonga's population is increasing, more housing and jobs are needed. With said issues, our culture, language and way of life is at risk. I see more and more children being deprived of learning our language every year. Traditions and moral values have nearly vanished. But for the years to come, we have learned to live with what we have, as our ancestors did before us.

Loss of culture and language is slowly becoming a reality. But with the assistance of the tribal community and the school, we can get our language back. We are an ever-growing people that do not know the luxury of having a new house to our own for more than a decade, maybe longer. As we all look to the path ahead of us, we shall look, not with negativity or frustration, but with hope and happiness.

[Phrase in Native tongue.] Thank you for hearing our voice.

Senator Murkowski. Thank you, Jacob, and thank you for ensuring that we do have the voice of the young people. You are really the future. Thank you for expressing that. We are very thankful for that.

Next, let's go to Brianne. It is wonderful to have you here and speak from the perspective of health.

STAETMENT OF BRIANNE P. GOLOGERGEN, CLINIC MANAGER, NORTON SOUND HEALTH CORPORATION

Ms. GOLOGERGEN. Senator Murkowski, members of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, it is an honor to testify before you today. Igamsiqayugvikamsi, thank you for being here and welcome to my home town.

Convening an Indian Affairs hearing in Savoonga is a historic moment. We appreciate your commitment to addressing the impacts of overcrowded housing in American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

I was raised by Aaron and Eleanor Gologergen of Savoonga. We are blessed to continue to live our way of life and practice our traditional lifestyle. We are Siberian Yupik. When I look back at how I was raised and the traditional values I was taught, I come to the sense that we are a very close-knit society. It is in our tradition to care for one another and live off our land. Our men climb our beach cliffs, we journey the Bering Sea and we roam our tundra. When a member of our community loses a loved one, we come together to help the grieving family, be it bringing food, cleaning the home, taking care of the kids and seeking donations for services. When people say, "It takes a community to raise a child," Savoonga is part of that living proof.

I serve as the manager of our local clinic. I am also a community health practitioner and have been for the last eight years. The clinic delivers acute, chronic and emergent care, and is staffed by four health aides: Mary Ann Seppilu, Chantal Miklahook, Danielle Reynolds, and Dorothy Kava, along with six new hires. The health aides work within the guidelines of the Alaska Community Health Aide Practitioner Manual, also known as the CHAM, in assessing and referring members of our community who seek medical care and consultation.

Our health aides work under the supervision of a physician located in Nome, Dr. Steven Daniel. Our health aides and clinic staff

are the front lines of health care delivery in our community, often experiencing and taking on the impacts of the housing crisis in our community.

Shedding light on the lack of housing, overcrowding in our homes and the impacts on our families is not always easy. But we recognize it is necessary to improve the lives of those living in our community. The health impacts of a lack of housing are real and pervasive, impacting entire families. It is simply a stressful situation. We must establish a pathway for our growing community.

At a fundamental level, if you don't have your own room or a quiet place to sleep, maintaining a regular sleep schedule becomes near impossible. When a person experiences a lack of sleep, like anyone, they can become irritable. In an overcrowded living situation, the entire mood and atmosphere of the home can become hostile.

Now, the stress of one individual due to a packed house has impacted everyone in the home. In some situations, it can cause violence within the home. When stress is released with resentment or physically, we at the clinic experience the impact of overcrowding in our community.

I am going to use general statistics for our region on domestic violence, out of respect for our community. In 2015, the Justice Center at the University of Alaska Anchorage surveyed our region's communities and reported that 51 percent of women in our region have experienced intimate partner violence, sexual violence, or both during their lifetimes. That means roughly one in two women in our region have experienced violence. The question remains, with the lack of housing, where does one go?

The health impacts of the housing crisis seen at the clinic are generally after hours. We treat and respond to lacerations after violence, intoxicated individuals, those who are experiencing suicidal ideation, and sometimes fall victim to medication overdose or attempted suicide. Unfortunately, these situations are common in to many of our Native communities. We see the impacts and the stress of the housing situation in our mothers and fathers.

For any scheduled visit, we ask, what are you here for today, what can we help you with? Oftentimes our patients are very stressed out, due to circumstances at home. It is common for our providers to offload that stress in order to provide adequate care. Our patients express tremendous amounts of stress from the difficulty of providing for the needs of their families, including groceries, beds to sleep on, dressers to store clothing or a broken freezer that prevents adequate food storage.

We have experienced patients worried because they fear the electricity shutting down. During well child visits, parents express their gratitude for the Women, Infants and Children nutrition program, as it helps feed their kids.

When the basic needs of housing and food are not met, the impacts are carrying much weight on the health of the individual. In overcrowded living conditions, the risk of spreading illness, such as the common cold or influenza, have real impacts on our families. When we have one sick kid, everyone else in the house gets sick.

For those that are on a high-blood pressure medication, we ask them to stay away from stressful situations. However, that is im-

possible without adequate housing. We recently experienced a recent bedbug incident. However, we found our community ill-equipped to respond, with nowhere to wash clothes or hot-dry belongings.

In the most recent years, we have had an increasing amount of new tuberculosis outbreaks. Larger groups of people living in close proximity results in a higher number of patients that are at risk of getting tuberculosis.

In closing, I look forward to hearing the outcomes of this hearing. It is imperative we establish pathways for young families. I recognize it is going to take all of us working together as a community, as a region. With your commitment and partnership, I believe we can improve the lives of those living here in Savoonga. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Gologergen follows:]

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Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you. Thank you to all of you for your words and for helping to educate others about the issues of overcrowding and inadequate housing. I think it is important that we recognize that the lack of a physical structure or the lack of an adequate, safe, sanitary physical structure has such an extraordinary ripple effect. Whether its impact on stress levels that lead to domestic violence, whether it is impact on a child who is not able to get adequate sleep, so therefore cannot really function during the school day, so it impacts the health, the education, the safety. It is extraordinary in its breadth and scope when you think about the significance of crowded conditions and what they mean to a family and to a community. So I appreciate all that you have shared with us.

I want to start out my questions with focus first on just the number of housing units. Chris, maybe you can help us with that. I think you had indicated that here in the State, we would need 60,000 to 80,000 homes to alleviate the situation. I don't know whether, Greg, you mentioned it in your testimony, either. I think you said we would need to increase production of housing stock by some 90 percent to meet the needs.

So can you share with me what is happening on the ground right now to bring on additional housing stock? As we walked up from the airport, there are six new units that are being built. I understand that there is an additional five or six that are being built in Gambell right now. But how will that help to alleviate the immediate crisis? And what is the plan to do more on this island for the immediate hosing needs?

Mr. KOLEROK. Senator, I am Chris Kolerok, with Bering Straits Regional Housing Authority. Thank you for that question. In In-

dian Country, we need 60,000 to 80,000 units across Indian Country. In Alaska, we need 16,000 units, according to a 2018 housing assessment by HFC. That is actually up 1,000 units from its last housing assessment in 2015.

So the housing situation is actually not getting better over time. And nowhere is that truer than here in Savoonga.

Your overall question of what are we going to do and how are we going to address inadequate housing is important. I want to make sure you are understanding, I am not trying to be flip, but we are trying to figure that out ourselves right now. One of the things that we need to keep in mind is that these housing units that we build with our own work, we self project manage, using force account labor, those housing units actually cost about 35 percent less than when we had put them out to bid to a contractor.

Senator MURKOWSKI. What will the full cost of these units be?

Mr. KOLEROK. These units will be just under the total development cost for HUD's guidelines. In total, we are expecting about $4.5 million for those six units, which, anywhere else in the Country, that amount of money would purchase a mansion.

Senator MURKOWSKI. How much of building cost is directly attributable to transportation costs?

Mr. KOLEROK. Transportation is an incredibly large part of that figure. The labor and the timing are expensive, the materials are expensive, because here, we need to build to a 120-mile an hour gust wind. We need very robust material, we need very good insulative material. And that is slightly more expensive than the average material.

But what makes everything more expensive is getting it here. When you think about how we have to get everything out here, including a hammer and a nail, that is either coming on a boat, or it is coming on an airplane. Just for reference, our tickets here were $575.00. On a certain day of the week, we could purchase tickets from Seattle to Hong Kong for $575.00.

Senator MURKOWSKI. That is an important part of the reality. This is not just here in Savoonga, but throughout the State of Alaska. The transportation costs, the high cost of living within the area contribute to the reality that has made it very difficult to do more than bring on one or two units at a time, because of the cost.

In terms of barriers to development, developing additional stock, it is transportation cost, are there regulatory, well, forget the regulatory, how much of an issue is the ability to get a sufficient number of lots that you need? I heard that as we walked in as well, that you are limited. You have a big island here. Delbert, you told me it is 100 miles long and——

Mr. PUNGOWIYI. One point two million acres.

Senator MURKOWSKI. One point two million acres. So people would say, you have all this land, why don't you just build houses everywhere. And the answer to that, for the record, Chris?

Mr. KOLEROK. Senator, the available land that we have is what is made available to us by the village corporation. And that is true in all of our villages that we operate. We are here, we may be close to running out of available lots to build. In places like Shaktoolik, there are essentially ten lots left in the village to build. So for the foreseeable short-term future, we can develop some housing there.

But after a decade or so, Shaktoolik will essentially be out of places to build.

For us here in Savoonga, our biggest barrier for construction has actually be infrastructure. As Delbert mentioned, we had taken about a decade for us to return to build new homes. As we were in the planning stages, we were told by the sewer and water regulator that the sewer and water system were at capacity, and that we would not be able to hook up our homes unless we built out that system.

That cost an entire extra home. We had budgeted an additional home here. That is not going to be a unique thing to Savoonga. We are expending resources to shore up infrastructure in Gambell. We will surely do so in Wales and Teller as well.

On the positive side, with some local partners and people taking initiative, like Megan, we are beginning the process of working together and sharing information earlier in our construction cycle so that we can start solving these problems and thinking about them earlier. But at the point where we were told it would cost an extra home to build a house, we had been waiting a decade and I could not in good conscience wait another year for that. So we ate that cost.

Senator MURKOWSKI. I think it is significant, talking about the construction challenges. I know from a regulatory perspective, and Greg, I would like your comment son this, that we have within the IHS system and the HUD system almost inherent barriers. I am not asking you to solve that problem. That is actually something that we have to address back in Washington, D.C.

But there are four States, including Alaska, where we have a restriction on IHS' ability to serve new homes that were built using grants from HUD housing. And this means that new homes that are built using grants from HUD are not eligible to be served by IHS sanitation construction programs, because they have a prohibited use of IHS funds on projects that have previously gotten HUD funding.

If that sounds like gibberish, it should be. It is basically how Washington works through different accounts. But what it does then is it limits your ability to ensure that when you have a home built, it is a whole home, that you can tie in to the water and sewer systems. So this is something that we have to address.

Greg, I would like your input in terms of those regulatory barriers that are limiting us. I would also like your comment, I believe it was stated by you, Chris, that the Indian Housing Block Grant provision, which has been so helpful to us, this is 28 percent down, costs have gone up, but we have not seen subsequent increases. Explain to me how that has impacted HUD's ability here to do more in the State.

Mr. KOLEROK. Thank you, Senator. I would agree that the prohibition for spending those dollars on unfunded projects is an issue that needs to be solved. Just from some of the information in Kawerak, it talks about hookup charges of $40,000 to $60,000.

Senator MURKOWSKI. That is just for the hookup?

Mr. KOLEROK. Yes. That assumes that the infrastructure is on the lot line. So it is an extremely large expense. We see that in all of our remote locations. Same with logistics, just to echo what you

were saying, I have seen that double the cost of materials, just to get the materials to the site. That is not talking about the heavy equipment and gravel and other resources that are necessary. So logistics is extremely, is a barrier to building affordable housing in remote Alaska communities.

We have seen, in the data from the use of NAHSADA funds, a decline in new units and an uptick on repairing existing homes. Our data shows that quite clearly over the last, I would say four or five years, there has really been a switch where tribes and their designated housing entities are taking on repair work instead of new construction. The data doesn't explain it. But I would assume it has to do with the cost of construction.

Senator MURKOWSKI. So let me ask on that, Greg, because it is my understanding that a lot of resources from HUD can only be used for new construction and not the renovation or the upkeep. You are saying that it has been much of the NAHASDA dollars that can go toward whether it is maintenance, upkeep or efficiency upgrades?

Mr. STUCKEY. Right. So NAHASDA has sort of a menu of options that tribes and their housing entities can use. And new construction and repair and energy upgrades, all the things you just named, are all eligible activities under NAHASDA. That is correct.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you. And then are we seeing HUD dollars that are then going to help with some of the energy efficiency aspects of it as well, to deal with some of the high costs?

Mr. STUCKEY. In the data, it only shows rehabilitation. So I couldn't describe that HUD-wide. But here in Alaska, certainly we see our housing entities and the tribes performing weatherization projects. I think that is important to hear what Chris said, that in that when he builds new homes, the materials are expensive because of how he is building them, so they can be energy efficient. But then when he talks about how much fuel they are using, the savings to the family, because the family is the one that pays that oil bill, is humongous. So those numbers, 100 gallons a month versus 20 gallons a month, at $6 or $8 a gallon, is a very large number.

Senator MURKOWSKI. When you think about what new housing brings in terms of lower costs, because of just better build and efficiency, dealing with the overcrowding, dealing with the disease aspect of it, because I think we recognize, when you don't have a house that is efficient and can circulate the air, you can have health conditions that are exacerbated because of that. I think that is something we see throughout the State, the levels of mold when you don't have adequate ventilation.

But also, you spoke a little bit, Chris, about the jobs, and the fact that you face that you utilized force account. So you got local folks. In fact, when I came in, I think they must have just left here to go back to work. But part of the crew that is out there building these units now that are all local men. So we are actually creating jobs. You said that you are using Alaska-sourced materials that are built to better withstand. So there is economic benefit to the region as well.

Mr. KOLEROK. Yes, Senator, that is right. Our crews that worked on this project, the majority of the labor was done, hired locally.

Our heavy equipment that was utilized for moving the earth was leased from the tribe and the city. We intentionally did as much spending here as possible, because that is part of the envisioning of NAHASDA, that housing development dollars would benefit the regions in which they are happening.

That is something that we are committed to, one of the side benefits of having people who, when we train a local workforce up in labor or carpentry, we know that we have a workforce that will be able to work for us repairing homes when something happens. We also know that we will have one or two people that, if they prove themselves technically and with dependability, that we will be able to put them on a different crew replicating the home.

We have intentions of repeating use of this home. And we are getting faster at building them. But we are also identifying people that will be on the next construction project who we think will have the dependability to come with us.

So even after the development in this village and in Gambell, there is the opportunity for some of those people to be earning a wage in constructing in a different village.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Gaetano, you had mentioned training for local tradesmen. Do we have any programs within the school that might be considered vocational education, actually helping to build put this workforce?

Mr. BRANCALEONE. Yes, absolutely. We were just able to construct an additional shop, additional shops here. So we have a wood shop, we also have a welding shop and a small engine job that are kind of geared toward that CTE, careers and technical education. We also partner with NACTEC in Nome. They have some pretty great programs that kids go out and participate in.

I just really believe in the importance of building that local capacity and training even in the programs of things that are within our reach. So we talk about material costs, and those things will always be a challenge or a barrier to overcome.

So what can we do outside of that? So building that local capacity, not just for constructing completely new units, but if you have 50 guys in town who are really good at analyzing a building for its energy efficiency or how to repair that and how to work on those, just with what they can pick up off the ground, I mean, the skills and ingenuity of people I have met out here is amazing. So if you guide that toward what can we do now without having to wait on outside help, I think that can not only help alleviate some of the immediate problems that we have, but also just instill value in people in a sense of, you can feel good about what you are doing and the change you are having in your village.

Senator MURKOWSKI. I would like to ask, both you, Gaetano, and then Brianne, you are a young professional in education, Brianne, you are a young professional in health care. What does it mean for purposes of your ability to bring in new teachers and have them feel good about staying in this community? You have been here for eight years. I met some of the teachers as I came in. It sounds like you are doing a good job out here in not only recruiting but retaining teachers. But I know that housing is always an issue.

Also on the health care side, as you seek to bring in people who may wish to work here in Savoonga, at the clinic, but they don't

have a family here, so they can't just move in with their parents or an auntie. How does the housing issue impact your ability to bring in people from the outside to come and call Savoonga home?

Mr. BRANCALEONE. Thank you, Senator. As you spoke about in your opening statement, talking about the principal living in the closet, I am very thankful that I do not have that situation today. There definitely have been great gains and progress in regard to providing housing for teachers.

That being said, we do still have a wide variety in the quality of our housing units for teachers. And there are housing issues that have been cited by teachers who have left in regard to their desire or willingness to stay out here. So there are challenges, again, with materials getting out here and the ability to repair when things go down and the sewer system.

So it is definitely something that is still a challenge in regard to retention. We still actually have three positions open this year that we are hoping to fill, and we start on Tuesday. So there has been a lot of progress made, but it is still a challenge in regard to people being comfortable living here.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Brianne, how about on the health care side?

Ms. GOLOGERGEN. It is hard. It costs a lot of money to get out here. For me to get out is $600 round-trip. And I have, for just three of us, me, my boyfriend and my daughter, it is $1,200 just to take a vacation. That is not including prices to Anchorage.

So it would be a challenge, to bring your entire family, to move out here. And a lot of the problems I have heard from providers moving out here is the isolation. But that too, the lack of housing, we have our PA, Troy Wiles is here until November, he is a traveling provider. He has been helping out here. But we still have a vacant for position for a mid-level provider to move out here, relocate here.

And they are building a duplex for PA housing right now, so that way we can better invite somebody to move out here and they would have a place to stay.

Senator MURKOWSKI. So, Delbert, as President of the Native Village of Savoonga, do you have people that are coming into the community, whether it is to look at some of the contaminated lands issues, or to maintain the wind turbines that you have out there, or just inspect them, it is expensive, yes, we recognize, to get out here. But then if people need to stay out here or want to stay out here for a period of time, is it fair to say that there no options for them to find a place to live?

Mr. PUNGOWIYI. With the severe housing crisis we have, that is a big obstacle, I believe. We are trying to do some self-generating entities, we have put up that. But it is like a snack and lodge for guests coming out here. But I do believe that having a place for them is a big problem.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Let me ask, as a community leader, you are responsible for the health and well-being of members of the community. How does overcrowding impact emergency preparedness? For instance, if the community had to be evacuated during a storm, is there a place to shelter in place? Obviously you have the school

here. But with the housing that you have, is that a worry for you as a community leader?

Mr. PUNGOWIYI. Yes. I will give you an example. I don't recollect what year it was, but we had an electrical disaster from the ice not coming in like it is normally supposed to, the north wind sprayed lots of salt water on the power lines. So we had a power outage within several hours. Gaetano knows, he was here. Over 400 families, 400 people in the high school. The homes got shut down, the water and sewer froze up.

Within a few hours, the store was wiped out. So this is the only shelter for any disaster. That is why we are so concerned about tsunami shelters, evacuation roads and shelters. According to the State of Alaska's coordinator for the tsunami warning and urging everyone along the cost, grants for tsunami shelters, evacuation roads, it is not a question of if Alaska will get struck with tsunami, it is a question of when. That really is scary to all those of us that live along the coast. At any moment, tsunami can strike.

So those are really issues that we feel, we believe that is in desperate need of action, so that we can have, at least an evacuation road, even if we could get just a road and the foundation for it, at least we would have somewhere to evacuate to, to higher ground. We have nowhere else to go for higher ground than up toward the mountains.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Let me ask just a couple more questions before we quit. I know there is a lunch planned.

As I was visiting with people before coming in, I was asking about the units that will soon be finished up and the process for being selected to receive one of those houses, and housing application process. We just had a hearing in Indian Affairs last week that was focused on Native languages and the opportunity to utilize grants. One of the things we heard very clearly was that the process to gain these grants is very complicated. It is difficult to navigate.

So I would ask you, Delbert, or any of you who may have had or who can share the experience in applying for housing assistance, how difficult is it? The one gentleman I was speaking with said that he had been on the list for years and years and years and years. And that the process was one that was lengthy and not easy. If someone can speak to that, that would be helpful.

Mr. KOLEROK. Senator, the process for applying for a home itself is—it is a bureaucratic paperwork, and that is what it is. The disheartening thing about it is, our last development was over a decade ago. So as people are applying for housing, in order to keep their date of application, they must annually recertify. And if there has been no new housing development for a decade, it is maddening for a person to recertify, not knowing if there is new housing even available. But doing so just to keep their spot in line.

What is even more difficult, we utilize a preference point system for selection. The preference points take into account factors such as an applicant's living in a substandard home, or if they are disabled or an elder. It is a little bit glib, but the worse a person's housing situation, the higher they are as a priority. And what is frustrating is when someone has been on a waiting list for ten years waiting for a home and someone, a different person applies

for a house and they have multiple factors that put them in a higher priority.

It is not easy. But we have adopted that system because we are, families are small, this region is small. So we have tried to put in place a system that is as black and white as possible, to make sure that we are as far as possible when considering the need for homes.

Senator MURKOWSKI. That is a hard reality, I agree. Jacob, you are a young man, going to be graduating this next year. Congratulations. As you think of your future here in Savoonga, we hear of the high costs, we hear of the long waiting list for housing, there will come a point when you will want to start your family, have your opportunities in front of you.

Because of the housing issues that you have grown up, that you live with, do you see this as a limiting factor for your future, if you don't have a place for your family in the future? Do you think that this might push you out of the village that you've grown up in, out to Nome or Anchorage or to other places? How does the overcrowding impact how you view your future in Savoonga?

Mr. IYA. It will be [inaudible] my grandmother pay the bills, and she struggles to put food on the table. Growing up, we were taught our morals and values, to live with one another. But as I see now, as I look to the future, I look not with temptation but with peace and happiness. I want to start my family as soon as I get out of college, when I have enough money to support a family. I will move out of this village and hope for a better life. But this village can still undergo certain changes that will help make its future brighter.

As I look to the future, more and more, there is a heavy pressure being weighed on our shoulders, the children of this community. I hope to alleviate that pressure in the future. Thank you, Senator Murkowski.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Jacob. You have articulated in a strong, beautiful way why we need to continue to work together to address these very basic issues. Because housing is a basic need. And when our future leaders don't feel that the place that they call home is one that is going to be part of their future, that makes it a very difficult reality for those who are living here today.

You have summed up in a strong and beautiful way why these issues are so important.

We haven't gone into some of the detail about the social aspects, although I think Brianne and Gaetano and Delbert, you have each addressed, again, this ripple effect. When you don't have the structure over your head, when you have too many human beings in too small a space, the stress that comes with it manifests itself in different ways, whether it is substance abuse, whether it is outbursts of violence or assault, whether it is just the inability to concentrate on your school or your work because of inadequate sleep, the outcome from health consequences, as disease and germs are spread, the inability to wash your family's clothes, to have basic hygiene, the impact on education and graduation rates.

I look at all that so many of you are trying to do. But sometimes these issues are beyond your control. The principal cannot go out and build more homes, so that his students can get a good night's sleep on a daily basis. Those who run our clinics can't go out and

build new homes so that the spread of disease is arrested. So we have an obligation, a responsibility to be working on these issues that again, surround a very basic, basic need.

There is so much more that we have to share. We will have an opportunity to do a little bit of walk-around this afternoon and visit, not only some of the new housing stock, but hopefully some of the existing homes that are experiencing the extreme overcrowding. That will be important.

We will also have an opportunity to engage further with the community. So I would ask that in a more informal setting, you share your stories, not just with me, but again, with members of the Indian Affairs Committee staff and those who have come to Savoonga today.

I mentioned to somebody this morning, yesterday I woke up in Washington, D.C. I spent the night in Nome. Three thousand, nine hundred and forty-seven miles. So coming here this morning, I think I am over 4,000 miles. But Delbert, you reminded me, we are 40 miles from Russia. I need to make sure that the people who are in Washington, D.C., some 4,000 miles from here, and four time zones, can see and hear and feel why these issues are so important.

You may be 4,000 miles away from our Nation's capital, but you are part of the United States of America. As Americans, you deserve to have safe and sanitary living conditions. So this is what we are going to keep working on. Thank you for helping us create the record with the Indian Affairs Committee today.

I want to thank you. I will note that if there are questions that Committee members may want to submit for the record, the hearing record will be kept open for two weeks. I want to thank, again, the witnesses for their time.

With that, the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:28 p.m., the hearing was concluded.]

A P P E N D I X

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MARY DAVID, ACTING PRESIDENT, KAWERAK INC.

Chairman Hoeven, Vice Chairman Udall, Senator Murkowski, members of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, it is an honor to welcome you to the Bering Strait region. The lack of access to affordable, efficient and safe housing impacts the health of our families and the education of our children. For too many generations, the lack of adequate housing has remained a silent crisis. Our tribal leaders recognize that we must change the paradigm to improve opportunities for the next generation and invest in the sustainability of our communities. Addressing the housing crisis remains our top priority.

Kawerak Inc. represents and serves the 20 tribal governments of the Bering Strait region, operating a tribal self-governance consortium of federal and state agencies. The Bering Strait region is home to Yupik, St. Lawrence Island Yupik and Inupiaq communities that have remained over millennia. Roughly 10,000 residents are located in 16 communities that continue to be sustained by the wealth of our location. The spirituality, well-being and health of our families and extended families is directly tied to our ability to hunt, fish, and gather. One of the largest migrations of birds and marine mammals including whales, walrus, and seals pass through the Bering Strait between the Pacific to the Arctic oceans. Our way of life can be defined by our natural resource rich environment, and what we harvest and gather during each season of the year.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development estimates a shortage of 1,386 homes in the Bering Strait region. According to a 2014 study conducted by the Association of Alaska Housing Authorities (AAHA), over 20 percent of homes in the region are overcrowded, with multiple generations or multiple families living under one roof. The community of Savoonga faces the highest overcrowding rate of any census area at 61 percent. Our population of 10,000 in the region continues to grow at roughly 10–20 percent every decade, according to U.S. Census data, and new housing construction has not kept up with our population growth.

Leaders of the Bering Strait region have recognized the need to address the housing crisis from a holistic approach including community planning, reducing the cost of construction, the state of sanitation and energy infrastructure, as well as improving access to basic government and financial services. The AAHA survey also highlights that the Bering Strait region has the least energy efficient homes in the State. The American Community Survey by the U.S. Census estimates approximately 24 percent of households in the region spend 30 percent or more of total income on housing costs including rent, water and sewer, and energy costs.

The lack of public infrastructure provides additional challenges to addressing the housing crisis. The cost of building a home in our communities runs between $500,000 and $600,000, depending on the existence of public infrastructure. Connecting homes to sewer and water adds roughly $40,000 to $60,000. An estimated 465 homes in the Bering Strait region do not have access to running water and sewer, with five communities remaining un-piped and unconnected to sanitation services (Stebbins, Teller, Wales, Diomede, and Shishmaref).

The pathway to service established by federal and state partners is complex and underfunded. Under the present allocation system, our leaders are contending with the reality that our unconnected communities will remain unserved over the next decade, unless swift action is taken. In partnership with Norton Sound Health Corporation, Kawerak continues to ensure federal and statewide agencies are responsive to the sanitation needs in our Bering Strait region communities.

Understanding the housing crisis from a statistical standpoint provides insight on the magnitude of need and required investment, yet the gravity of our reality must be understood through the context of our history. The health of our communities is defined by our ability to live our way of life on our lands and waters. Alaska's early history of the colonization of Alaska Natives people has had intergenerational impacts on the cultural health of entire communities, including disease, language loss and relocation. The increasing regulation of complex state, federal and international

jurisdictions has burdened our ability to hunt and fish on our homelands. Alcohol continues to impact families of the region in debilitating ways. The economic costs to our society are real with increased high school drop outs, the high rate of suicide (four times the national average) and lost productivity. The cornerstone of building a healthy and a strong economy is the ability to live our way of life on our homelands.

Bering Strait Region Housing Strategy

Our tribal leaders recognize that addressing the magnitude of challenges before us will require a strong commitment to partnership. Our tribal leaders have begun dialogues in understanding the role of our tribal governments, city governments, native corporations, and our regional tribal consortia in the planning and investment of infrastructure needs in our communities. Living our way of life on our lands and waters has sustained our wealth as a people. It is with that in mind we envision the sustainable development of our communities with culturally relevant infrastructure. In partnership with regional organizations, Kawerak Inc. has undertaken the development of a Bering Strait Region Housing Strategy to evaluate and establish pathways to homeownership in our communities.

The Bering Strait Region Housing Strategy will explore the following themes:

- Community Preparedness for Development
- Reducing jurisdictional complexities in community governance to streamline infrastructure development and improve operations and maintenance of existing systems.
- Improving Access to Finance & Government Services
- Energy Efficiency & Utility Planning
- Research & Development for Arctic Engineering and Design
- Culturally relevant infrastructure development

In order to ensure our communities are development ready, leaders recognize we must understand inherent jurisdictional complexities that are the reality of rural Alaska today. Identifying land for development and platting lots, planning for roads, sewer and water, and energy infrastructure requires involvement and decision-making among multiple community and regional leaders. Understanding the roles of our Alaska Native corporations as land owners, city governments as utility owners, as well as tribal governments and their associated regional tribal organizations as service providers delivering investment in housing, sewer and water, and roads. Kawerak has convened dialogues with tribal, city, and corporation leaders to empower leaders with the knowledge and tools to change the paradigm for the planning and development of communities.

With the goal of improving economies of scale and reducing the cost of construction in our communities, Kawerak has embarked on the creation of Long Range Infrastructure Plans in partnership with communities to allow for coordination if not cooperation in the planning and investment of public infrastructure. With dialogue at both the community and regional level our work has just begun. Business managers of regional tribal organizations have begun to understand our collective assets from a regional strategic perspective to reduce labor, equipment, material, and transportation costs in our communities.

Much work remains to improve the affordability of new home construction, establish access to financial services, as well as improve the general economic conditions of our communities. In closing we appreciate the commitment and partnership of Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan, Congressman Young, the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, and the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Kawerak encourages the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs & Congress to:

- Reauthorize the Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act and support the increase appropriations for the Indian Housing Block Grant to $700 million.
- Request the GAO to work with tribal leaders to conduct a regulatory review of the market barriers to home ownership and identify barriers to expanding financing options in remote and rural economies.
- Establish an interagency task force to develop a pathway to homeownership in Native communities, including the creation of a single intake form for all federal housing programs (USDA, BIA, HUD, VA).
- Support the research and development to improve construction design & engineering in Arctic communities.

- Explore options for a tribally driven lending instrument with the Department of Treasury.
- Support the creation of tax incentives for housing construction in rural communities by Alaska Native corporations.
- Improve the collection of U.S. Census and American Community Survey data. Provide the financial resources to tribes, so accurate data can be obtained at the local level.
- Reform the Denali Commission to assist communities with pre-development operations (planning, plating) to encourage public infrastructure investment in communities.
- Encourage the BIA Division of Economic Development to invest and support village corporation and tribal business in the home construction and manufacturing industry.

The United States provides humanitarian efforts to other countries; often times spending millions of dollars in aid. We are in a humanitarian situation due to the severe overcrowding and lack of adequate and affordable housing. Physical requirements for human survival and to function properly is shelter. We live in the most developed country in the world, but still struggle and face challenges in many areas. Thank you for allowing testimony on this important issue.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF NORTON SOUND HEALTH CORPORATION

Overcrowding Negatively Impacts Health

The World Health Organization defines overcrowding as more than 1.5 persons per habitable room (rooms other than bathroom and kitchen).

Health: Studies have definitely linked overcrowding to higher risks of tuberculosis, meningitis, acute and chronic respiratory illnesses, SIDS, and child mortality. As patients age, the risk of H. Pylori, the bacteria responsible for stomach ulcers and stomach cancer, is highly correlated to overcrowding.

Respiratory: A human sneeze carries water droplets (and the viruses/bacteria in them) up to 15 feet from the source. In crowded homes coughing and sneezing quickly spreads respiratory infections to an entire home with "no where to hide". This leads to rapid spread of colds, flu's and pneumonia throughout communities. Research shows that overcrowded homes vastly increase the spread of tuberculosis (TB).

Air Pollution: Crowded indoor spaces amplify the effects of air pollutants, especially in Alaskan homes with poor ventilation. Tobacco smoke, carbon monoxide (from furnaces and wood stoves, fine particulate air particles (like dust/dander) increases and/or concentrate. This has been shown to directly correlate to childhood asthma and COPD an emphysema in adults.

Gastrointestinal: Crowded homes make sanitation much more difficult, which increases the transmission of communicable diseases like gastrointestinal infections, H. Pylori infection (linked to stomach ulcers and stomach cancer), as well as risk for fecal/oral transmission of infections like Noro virus, Hepatitis A, and Shigella.

Skin infections: Increased crowding in homes directly correlates to increased incidence of diseases like scabies and lice. Also, higher rates of cellulitis, impetigo, eczema, and allergies are seen in crowded homes especially where limited sanitation options are availability.

Mental Health: In a British study, researchers found that 86 percent of overcrowded households stated that depression, anxiety and stress resulted from cramped living conditions; further 75 percent reported that overcrowding negatively affected children's health. (Full house? How overcrowded housing affects families). Research shows that increased population density in homes is correlated with increased aggression, less stable families, decreased maternal/child interaction, and higher rates of illness.

Mortality: The World Health Organization has linked overcrowding to risk of sudden infant death syndrome, child mortality, poor maternal/fetal outcomes, and overall decreased life expectancy.

Educational Outcomes: Children who lack comfortable, quiet space have increased difficulty with studying and reading affecting school performance. Further, when space is more scarce, different sleeping schedules held by household members may disturb children's sleep, leading to difficulty concentrating during the day, negatively affecting mood, behavioral and school performance. In-addition, children in crowded housing have a higher probability of contracting illnesses, which further

interfere with routines and increase school absenteeism. (*Solari, et al. Soc Sci Res. 2012 Mar; 41(2): 464–476.*))

Long term: These educational, behavioral, and physical health disadvantages continue v..with children throughout their lives decreasing their chances to access higher education-and socioeconomic attainment. Ultimately, this often results in children finding themselves in similar situations as their parents, contributing to intergenerational transmission of social inequality. (Leventhal and Newman 2010)

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