TESTIMONY OF

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ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you to discuss the reauthorization of the Native American Programs Act (NAPA). As the Commissioner for the Administration for Native Americans (ANA) located within the Administration for Children and Families at the Department of Health and Human Services, I have responsibility for administering the Native American Programs Act.

The purpose of NAPA is to promote the goal of economic and social self-sufficiency for American Indians, Native Hawaiians, Alaska Natives, and other Native American Pacific Islanders, including American Samoans and the Native people of Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. Each of these culturally diverse populations has their own traditions, languages, and community social and economic challenges.

The FY 2004 budget of $45 million supports three grant programs. The Social and Economic Development Strategies (SEDS) program uses competitive financial assistance grants in support of locally determined and designed projects to address community needs and goals and supports Native communities in their efforts to reduce dependency on public funds and social services by increasing community and individual productivity through community development. The Environmental Regulatory Enhancement program assists Tribes in the planning, development and implementation of projects that were designed to improve their capacity to regulate environmental activities. The Language Preservation and Maintenance program is designed to ensure the preservation and enhancement of Native American languages. The Administration is pleased to support the reauthorization of each of these vital programs.

ANA's funding is targeted to projects that are community-based, community-determined, and community-implemented. For example:

·   In Hawaii, an organic farm teaches and practices traditional growing methods to at-risk youth.

·   In Colorado, the Native American Sports Council is combining traditional Native American values with athletic excellence and wellness. This program has touched over 1,500 Native American athletes and coaches.

·   In Montana, the Fort Peck Reservation has developed a manufacturing business that has created over 200 jobs.

·   In Oklahoma, the Cherokee Nation has developed school-based language immersion programs and after school programs.

·   In Arizona, the Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona (ITCA), which represents 20 Tribes, developed a plan for the renovation of a historic building. This building now houses the ITCA offices and provides health and human services assistance to community members.

·   In Washington State, the Affiliated Tribes of the Pacific Northwest have developed travel and tourism brochures, videotapes and marketing materials that have increased their tourism revenue.

·   In North Dakota, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe is building business and financial plans that will enable them to purchase and operate their own local telephone company.

·   In Alaska, Port Graham is laying the foundation for development of a value-added fish processing operation. This will allow Port Graham to diversify their fish processing operations and identify value-added products supported by the marketplace.

In addition to authorizing these key Native American programs, NAPA authorizes the Departmental Council on Native American Affairs (Council). I serve as the Council chair.   In 2002, Secretary Thompson elevated the Council to the Office of the Secretary. This Council is comprised of the principals from all the HHS Operating and Staff Divisions and meets four times a year. Last year, the Council completed an HHS Tribal accessibility study that identified programs from which Tribes are eligible to receive funding. This year, the Council is identifying the barriers that Tribes face when trying to access these programs.

About 18 months ago, when I became Commissioner, I conducted a thorough review of ANA, and based on that review, developed an organizational action plan to make an

already great program more streamlined, more cost effective and more accessible to our Native communities. As a result, ANA has restructured how it delivers its program services and automated its panel review process to allow for data collection and project monitoring. I would like to describe some of ANA's major accomplishments.

First, we have updated the ANA program announcement to clarify, streamline and standardize the application submission process. In addition, the new program announcements now require ANA applicants to identify performance indictors to be used to evaluate the success of a funded project. ANA has never consistently collected quantitative data to track the success of grantees. This lack of data hinders ANA's ability to inform the Congress on the effectiveness of ANA programs and their community impact. The new performance indicators will allow ANA to document consistently the number of people trained; the number of jobs created and retained; the number of children, youth and families served; the amount of non-government investment in each project; the transference of language and fluency; the number of businesses retained or expanded; the dollars invested in community infrastructure; and the number and type of new Tribal codes and ordinances developed and implemented.

Second, we consolidated program competitions and expanded non-profit organizations' ability to apply for grants. Previously, under each ANA program area, ANA awarded only one grant that impacted a reservation, Tribe or Native American community. Beginning in FY 2004, in addition to a Tribe, multiple non-profit organizations may compete for funding. The reason for this program modification is to expand and support

large rural and urban communities that need a variety of services. In addition to Tribes

being able to have three simultaneous ANA grants (SEDS, Language and Environmental)

at any one time, this clarification allows other community-based organizations to apply

for and receive ANA funding, provided the objectives and activities do not duplicate

currently funded projects.

In addition, during FY 2004, ANA released three separate program announcements, one

each for SEDS, including Alaska SEDS, Language Preservation and Maintenance, and

Environmental Regulatory Enhancement. Each announcement had one closing date.

Previously, ANA had two to three competitions per fiscal year for SEDS, one for

Language, and one for Environmental Regulatory Enhancement. Closing dates were

staggered over a four-week period to allow Tribes and Native organizations the

opportunity to apply to all program areas. The new application closing process will allow

ANA to release all funding to communities earlier in the fiscal year. It also will provide

additional time for applicants to receive technical assistance training in project

development and application preparation and allow grantees the opportunity to

implement projects in a timely manner, recruit personnel necessary to support the

grantee's objectives, and decrease the number of requests for grant extensions. The

results of this consolidation have allowed ANA to decrease the administrative costs

associated with multiple closings, and use the cost savings to award additional grants.

In compliance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 and in accordance with the

Federal government-wide E-Grants initiative, ANA has automated its application receipt

and panel review process. The new automation and document management system has provided significant program and cost efficiencies. It has allowed ANA to collect program data such as the type of project to be funded; track grantee progress and project expenditures; identify non-federal project investments; provide effective and timely comments to unsuccessful applicants; track the effectiveness of technical assistance providers; and ensure that ANA does not duplicate grant projects that may have been funded in prior years.

While ANA is required by statute to provide training and technical assistance (T/TA) to all potential applicants, we had not previously conducted a full evaluation of the effectiveness of ANA T/TA providers. Therefore, in FY 2003, ANA implemented a T/TA tracking system to monitor which applicants received services and the effectiveness of these services. This change has been positive and successful across the board. Other HHS agencies are now contracting with ANA T/TA providers to serve Native communities participating in their programs.

Beginning in August 2004, ANA T/TA providers will start to teach project development. Training participants will be taught how to lay out the components of a project and an implementation plan, and how to develop quantitative and qualitative performance indicators.

Finally, the NAPA requires that ANA evaluate its grant portfolio not less frequently than every three years. We have chosen to fulfill this requirement by dividing our portfolio

into thirds and evaluating one third annually. ANA now is refining an evaluation tool that will assist us assessing the long-term community impact of ANA funded projects. The evaluation tool also will assess how well the ANA program and its services meet the needs of its community. I look forward to reporting the results of these evaluations to this Committee in the near future.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, the ANA programs provide funding for unique community projects that make a difference in the lives of our Native children, youth and families. ANA also funds the widest range of Native organizations and communities. It is ANA's goal to fund as many quality projects as possible and to work with our grantees and communities to ensure the success of each project.

I look forward to working with this Committee on the reauthorization of the Native American Programs Act and to continue to improve our ability provide the seed capital and technical assistance tools communities need to achieve their goals of social and economic self-sufficiency.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have for me at this time.