

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

STATEMENT

OF

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INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE

BEFORE THE

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE AFFAIRS

HEARING ON

H.R. 443 – PROVIDE FOR THE CONVEYANCE OF CERTAIN PROPERTY

FROM THE UNITED STATES TO THE MANILAQ ASSOCIATION

LOCATED IN KOTZEBUE, ALASKA

AND

H.R. 444 – PROVIDE FOR CONVEYANCE OF CERTAIN PROPERTY

LOCATED IN ANCHORAGE, ALASKA FROM THE UNITED STATES TO

THE ALASKA NATIVE TRIBAL HEALTH CONSORTIUM

SEPTEMBER 22, 2011

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Good afternoon. I am Robert McSwain, Deputy Director for Management Operations of the Indian Health Service (IHS). I am pleased to have the opportunity to testify on the two bills, H.R. 443 for the Maniilaq Association and H.R. 444 for Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, providing for the conveyance of Indian Health Service (IHS) real property located in Alaska to Alaska Tribal Organizations.

The Indian Health Service plays a unique role in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) because it is a health care system that was established to meet the federal trust responsibility to provide health care to American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs). The mission of the IHS, in partnership with American Indian and Alaska Native people, is to raise the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of AI/ANs to the highest level. The IHS provides comprehensive health service delivery to approximately 1.9 million AI/ANs through 31 Hospitals, 50 health centers, 31 health stations and 2 school health centers. Tribes also provide healthcare access through an additional 15 hospitals, 254 health centers, 166 Alaska Village Clinics, 112 health stations and 18 school health centers. In support of the IHS mission, the IHS and Tribes provide optimum availability to functional, well maintained and accredited health care facilities and staff housing.

H.R. 443 and H.R. 444 deal with the conveyance of lands located in Alaska which were used by the federal government for the delivery of IHS services to the Alaska Native communities. In 1995 and 1998 respectively the Maniilaq Association in Kotzebue, Alaska and the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) in Anchorage, Alaska each assumed responsibility for the provision of these IHS-funded health care services under the authority of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA). Some of the federal property which had been used in connection with health and related programs in Kotzebue, Alaska by the IHS was transferred through quit claim deeds to the Maniilaq Association. The property used in connection with the health and related programs administered by the ANTHC in Anchorage, Alaska remains federal property.

H.R. 443 provides for the conveyance of the Kotzebue property from the United States to the Maniilaq Association and proposes to modify the existing quit claim deed transfer by requiring the use of a warranty deed. On March 31, 2009, IHS transferred ownership of the Maniilaq Health Center/Hospital. After completing environmental review and certification on November 18, 2009, the two additional parcels of property named in this bill including staff quarters were transferred. However, the property descriptions of the parcels in H.R. 443 are incorrect. The correct descriptions of the parcels are:

KOTZEBUE HOSPITAL AND LAND

Re-Plat of Friends Mission Reserve, Subdivision No. 2, U.S. Survey 2082, Lot 1, Block 12, containing 8.10 acres recorded in Kotzebue Recording District, August 18, 2009.

**KOTZEBUE QUARTERS AKA Kikiktagruk Inupiat Corporation
(KIC) SITE**

Re-Plat of Friends Mission Reserve, U.S. Survey 2082, Lot 1A, Block 13, containing 5.229 acres.

KOTZEBUE QUARTERS AKA NANA SITE

Lot 1B, Block 26, Tract A, Townsite of Kotzebue, U.S. Survey No. 2863B containing 1.29 acres.

H.R. 444 provides for the conveyance of the federal property used by the ANTHC in connection with the provision of IHS-funded health care and related health services in Anchorage, Alaska by requiring the transfer of the parcel by warranty deed. We recommend that the timeframe for conveyance of the property be consistent with that in H.R. 443.

The IHS supports the conveyance of the federal properties in the two bills in a manner that is beneficial to Alaska Natives. However, we are still reviewing the specific language to determine how it might impact IHS and its programs. We look forward to working with you, Mr. Chairman, on measures like these to improve the health of the Alaskan Native population. Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you to discuss H.R. 443 and H.R. 444. I will be happy to answer any questions the committee may have. Thank you.