

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 8, 2024

The Honorable Brian Schatz
Chair
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Room S-128
The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Schatz:

We write to you today as advocates for Tribal Nations, seeking your support for the highest possible funding for Tribal housing programs, including those authorized in the Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act (NAHASDA), in the final Fiscal Year 2024 appropriations bill.

As you are aware, Native communities face unique challenges that have been exacerbated by the pandemic, including overcrowded living conditions, lack of basic utilities, and insufficient housing infrastructure. Current Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) estimates show that there is a national housing shortage for low-income families in Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG) funding areas of 276,257 homes.¹ Additionally, HUD numbers show that 62,016 American Indian/Alaska Native households are living in overcrowded conditions.²

In New Mexico, Tribes and Pueblos continue to face a shortage of adequate, safe, and affordable housing. Many traditional homes are in dire need of structural repairs and other improvements to meet habitability standards, and Tribes are facing greater demands for new housing units to relieve overcrowding in many multigenerational homes. These conditions not only threaten the health and safety of Tribal residents but also impede broader efforts toward economic and social development within these communities.

New Mexico Tribes and Pueblos rely on IHBG funds for housing construction and rehabilitation, maintenance of current housing stock, and provision of affordable housing services for low-income families. Many Tribes also depend on these, and other Tribal housing programs like Tribal HUD-VASH and Section 184, to provide needed housing support to their members and leverage other funding sources. However, the demand for adequate housing far exceeds the current funding levels, leaving many essential projects unfunded or incomplete.

NAHASDA grant programs have been a cornerstone in addressing these housing needs by empowering Tribes with the autonomy to tailor housing programs to their specific needs. The increase in funding during COVID, including an increase in IHBG Competitive funding, was the

¹ FY2024 IHBG Estimate Allocation.

² Ibid.

first major increase in IHBG funding in years. However, these increases still leave Tribal housing funding levels below the 1998 adjusted NAHASDA levels.

An increase in appropriations for Tribal housing programs is not merely a budgetary consideration but a moral imperative to uphold our commitments to Tribal sovereignty and self-determination. By providing the necessary resources, we can make significant strides in improving living conditions in Indian Country, thereby fostering healthier communities, stronger economies, and a more equitable society.

We respectfully request the Subcommittee to prioritize the needs of Native communities in the Fiscal Year 2024 appropriations bill by allocating the highest possible funding levels for Tribal housing, including NAHASDA-authorized programs. Investing in Tribal housing is an investment in the future of Native peoples and the nation as a whole.

We appreciate your attention to this critical matter and stand ready to work with you and your colleagues to support Native communities and Tribal Nations.

Sincerely,



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Ben Ray Luján
United States Senator