

Chairman Dingell, Subcommittee on Health hearing entitled "H.R. 1328, the Indian Healthcare Improvement Act Amendments of 2007"

Statement of Congressman John D. Dingell, Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH
HEARING ENTITLED "H.R. 1328, THE INDIAN HEALTH CARE IMPROVEMENT ACT AMENDMENTS OF 2007"
June 7, 2007

Thank you, Chairman Pallone. I thank our distinguished witnesses for appearing before the Subcommittee to discuss the reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act. I also wish to acknowledge the leadership of my friend, Chairman Pallone, for expediting this bill's consideration before the Committee. I look forward to working on this important legislation to ensure that Indian Health Services has the resources to respond to the complex needs of American Indian and Alaskan Native communities.

For nearly a decade, Congress has considered the reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act. Proposals have been offered in each of the past four Congresses, yet a reauthorization bill has never passed. Congress simply has not given sufficient priority and attention to reauthorizing this Act, even though this legislation would ensure that American Indians and Alaskan Natives receive the critical health care needed in their communities.

As this legislation moves forward, we want to meet several goals: improving tribal participation in negotiated rule-making, providing and strengthening needed health services, and addressing ongoing concerns about reimbursement provisions for Medicaid and other Federal programs.

When their lands were originally ceded, the Federal Government promised that these Native Americans would receive decent healthcare services. Unless we address the serious deficiencies in the current Indian Health Service programs, especially as they relate to accessing mental health services and urban health centers, we have failed to make good on our promise to the American Indian and Alaskan Native people.

Again, thank you Mr. Chairman for holding this hearing. I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses.

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