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Osage Nation Health Executive Representative

Statement of Testimony

Mark Earl Rogers, MAL, CEO, FACHE, FACMPE, CHC

Osage Nation, Osage Nation Health System

Pawhuska, OK 74056

Hawe'(Hello): I'm Mark Earl Rogers, CEO of the Osage Nation Health System, and it is a distinct honor today to present before you, on the behalf of the Honorable Chief (Kiheka) Geoffrey Standing Bear of the Osage Nation, some brief remarks regarding the positive impacts of our health programs upon the Osage people, their families, and the community through the life-changing impacts of self-governance and self-determination in Oklahoma's largest County, Osage County, located in the Pawnee Service Unit (Note 1). Our funding via a Compact with the U.S. Government under the self-governance mechanism has brought incredible economic viability, stability, and services to the people of the Osage Nation and other tribal members we service, along with our grant's programs. I often describe these integrated services as a programmatic "tapestry or quilt" of interwoven programs to service our population in ways that are vitally important to the health and well-being of the Osage Nation and does indeed have life and death consequences for many of the people we serve. Some of these services include:

- Medical, dental, optometry services, specialty care (Note 2), behavioral health and substance abuse services, and other vital programs like public health immunization needs of the community.
- A diabetes grant providing education, limb care and control of diabetes to decrease non-compliance, lowering long-term diabetic complications such as dialysis and limb amputation(s).
- "Osage Strong" active early interventional clinic educating children and adults on healthy eating, dieting, and exercise with weight management for overall health.
- Serving nutritional meals and addressing food insecurity annually for our tribal elders via Title VI program (Note 3).
- Our Community Health Representatives and Senior Services grants provide the transportation of elders to medical appointments (sometimes over a four to five hour round trip), as well as provide social services, case management, and other coordinated

- care for a population often suffering from geographic loneliness, food and transportation insecurity, whilst residing in these remote parts of our service area.
- Mobile Medical Unit (MMU) program with two units in operation that service the medical, dental, behavioral, and public health vaccination and immunization needs of our tribal members located in areas where reliable transportation is a barrier to accessing healthcare in a reliable manner, often supporting non-tribal members in the process. Noteworthy was the Osage Nation's Tribal response to the 2024 Barnsdall Tornado emergencies during multiple declared states of emergencies with vitally important services (Note 4).

Self-governance has provided not only more services to the tribe and area, but it has also generated incredible economic opportunities for both Native American and non-Native citizens alike. Everyone prospers in our community when the Osage Nation prospers. Self-governance has provided this ability to deliver these programs and services to the people in a more robust, decentralized manner allowing the Osage Nation to leverage these vital programs and services as a result. Some of these opportunities include:

- Approximately \$85 million dollars in new construction with investments in health-related services with a new clinic, expansion clinic, assisted living facility, and primary residential substance abuse center providing jobs and opportunities on a grand scale in the community.
- Our self-governed tribal health system and grants programs create jobs via an annual budget of \$62M in the region with payroll, taxes, community infrastructure, education, and housing market stability; it also provides invaluable cultural and tribally unique opportunities for the Osage people that are vitally important as a proud, viable Nation of Native peoples central to self-governance and self-determination.
- Our area vocational programs and higher education institutions also benefit with producing the future workforce necessary to staff our programs and deliver these vital services to the community, keeping the next generation home with a future and thus bending the curve of outward migration from decades past.
- Development of the Daposka Ahnkodapi ("Our School" in Osage), to strengthen and preserve language and culture through education (Note 5).
- The economic impacts of being a self-governed tribe allow for a new, younger generation to remain within their communities with options and opportunities not previously available in Osage County (Note 6).
- Osage Nation tribal members also are more involved in their own governance, providing further employment opportunities to serve the Osage Nation both in tribal government and with other elected positions to guide their tribe now and into the future.
- An ability to remain culturally active as a tribal nation to grow and stabilize in both ceremonies, language, and traditions, all vitally important to the Osage people since

time immemorial, with traditions handed down from their ancestors, allowing for the Osage people to be the Osage Nation.

It is with great honor that I share my experiences with you on behalf of the great Osage Nation and its proud people, and to present this testimony today before this committee as requested. Thank you again for this opportunity and thank you to the United States Congress for all it has done, and continues to do, in advancing the recognition, economic needs, and self-determination of all Native Americans. We-wi-nah (Thank you).

Written Support/Notes for Testimony:

1. Osage County Total Land Space is 1.47 million acres or 2,304 Square Miles of land and water surface area; Osage Nation Total Tribal membership is >25,000, with 4,467 living in Osage County. Patient population served is >10,000 in total programmatic impacts annually.

2. Specialty Care Comprises: Cardiology, Neurology, Orthopedic, Dermatology, Podiatry, Nephrology, Psychiatry, and Gynecology services. Being in-house eliminates needless hours of inconvenient driving, quicker access to care from one year or more to days or weeks now, in-house accessing specialty care along with related pre/post-operative procedures. Osage Nation Health System (ONHS) is a tribally recognized Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC).

3. Total Title VI nutritional meals served annually >30,000 for at risk elders including weekend shelf stable meals for at risk seniors/elders and shelf stable meals issued during inclement weather (i.e., snow days). Homebound seniors are also provided with home meal deliveries throughout the year during service hours Monday through Friday in the Pawhuska, Fairfax and Hominy areas of Osage County.

4. During the Barnsdall Tornado emergencies in 2024, whereby a National, State, and Tribal States of Emergency were declared, the Osage Nation and Health System provided invaluable integrated response and healthcare services to the entire community, the Health System being specifically requested by FEMA to remain on-site for weeks after the events to provide medical support, social services, and mental and behavioral health counseling services to all community members, with our other community partners present. This would not have happened without us being a self-governed health program and the tribal leadership having both the organic tools and logistical capability, as well as the flexibility, to direct vital life-saving services and care when and where they were needed, for both Native and non-Native community members.

5. Daposka Ahnkodapi (Our School in Osage) is a private school serving Osage children from six-weeks through 8th grade that was established by the tribe to strengthen and preserve its language and culture through education. The program also provides before and after school support for working parents who children attend and participate in the program.

6. \$50 million dollar new 60,000 square foot clinic; \$20 million-dollar five facility men's, women's, and adolescent inpatient substance abuse center with transitional housing and administration building; \$9.5 million dollar Assisted Living Facility; and \$3.5 million dollar expansion clinic. Good paying and secure healthcare related job opportunities in Nursing, Ancillary support roles (Laboratory, Health IT, Administration, Business Office, Finance, Radiology/Diagnostic Services, and Grant positions, etc.), that provide solid good paying, full-time employment with benefits including retirement plans for several hundred employees currently. Our total employees today are: 210; Osage Health Employees: 74; Non-Osage/Native American employees: 54; Non-Native employees: 84, with another 85-100 positions forecasted within the next 12-18 months. The economic impact of the services and big-ticket items we

purchase, for both our operations and for care provided outside our community, is huge and noteworthy. We purchase all of our vehicles from area vendors, all of our medical and other supplies, to include high-dollar diagnostic and other medical equipment with service contracts, from area vendors as well as expend millions of dollars over the past few years alone with area hospitals, specialists for specialty care, and ambulatory surgical procedures, providing the area hospitals from Pawhuska, Bartlesville to Tulsa with a patient population that helps sustain these larger institutions important for everyone in our communities and within the State medical system. Securing a \$50M loan, debt serviced by health's third-party revenue resources, to construct a 60,000 square foot state-of-the-art health clinic to service our Native American patients with new equipment and facilities, replacing outdated facilities and consolidating services into a single location responding to the growth in our population and the surrounding community for years to come. Without being a self-governed tribe, this would have been nearly impossible to accomplish otherwise and provide jobs and steady work for hundreds of people for years in the process (short-term with construction 350 construction jobs, and long-term with 210 jobs and growing with the Health System).