Pesha Awamooa'a me Amber Torres me nane'a nu Agai Dicutta Poinabe nu Agai Gway (Good morning, my name is Amber Torres, Chairman for the Walker River Paiute Tribe in Schurz, NV 89427)

I want to thank Chairwoman Marcia L. Fudge and Ranking Member Rodney Davis and members of the Committee on House Administration, Subcommittee on Elections for the opportunity to testify about Native American Voting Rights: Exploring Barriers and Solutions.

In 2016 the Walker River and Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribes working with Four Directions Inc. to determine if Tribal members living on the reservations had equal access to the ballot box. It was determined that the poverty rate, lack of transportation and/or the age and condition of the vehicles placed Tribal members at a disadvantage in participating in early in-person voting.

On or about September 7th, 2016 a complaints/an emergency Motion for Preliminary Injunction was filed in Federal Court that the alleged abridgment of a fundamental right—the right to vote and in particular, to have equal access to early in-person voting and election day in-person polling—protected under Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, Sanchez, et al., Plaintiffs, v. Barbara K. Cegavske.

A hearing on this matter was held and the Honorable Judge Du, and the stance taken by the Tribal members was supported by a preliminary expert report from Professor Daniel Craig McCool of the University of Utah and a Statement of Interest filed by the Department of Justice. On or about October 7, 2020 the honorable Judge Du, issued an ordered that Plaintiffs' Motion for Preliminary Injunction (ECF No. 26) is granted in part and denied in part. The Motion is granted with respect to Plaintiffs' request for early in-person voting in Nixon and Schurz. The Motion is also granted with respect to Plaintiffs' request for election day in-person voting in Nixon. The Motion is denied with respect to Plaintiffs' request for in-person voter registration in Nixon and Schurz.

Since that time the Nevada State legislators created legislation that allows Counties to work with other Nevada Tribes to establish satellite offices. We have also seen an increase of Tribal members, voter turnout because of the satellite offices, these are new registered.

One problem that still creates problems to this day, is the felony provision in the State of Nevada Voter Registration Application. Line 15 on the form states: "Important! If you are assisting a person to register to vote and you are not a Field Registrar appointed by a County Clerk / Registrar of Voters or an employee of a voter registration agency, you MUST complete the following. Your signature is required. Failure to do so is a felony."

This creates problems within our reservations in that our youth tend to help their grandparents in everyday activities, and this provision make them hesitant and/or not wanting to assist the elders in voter registration, in that if they forget they could be charged with a felony. It would only take Nevada legislation to remove this barrier, but until such time the Field Registrar appointed by a County Clerk / Registrar of Voters or an employee of a voter registration agency should be assigned to our reservations to assist with voter registration.

We also would like the House and Senate to support the H.R.1694 - Native American Voting Rights Act of 2019.

Thank you for your time for allowing me to testify before this committee on issues of voter equality at the Ballot Box.

Pesha U (Thank you)

Chairwoman Amber Torres
Walker River Paiute Tribe