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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6450

MIKE ANDREWS, MAJORITY STAFF DIRECTOR
JENNIFER ROMERO, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

September 21, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

The Honorable Tom Price
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

The Honorable Jonodev Chaudhuri
Commissioner
National Indian Gaming Commission
1849 C St. NW
Mail Stop #1621
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke, Secretary Price, and Commissioner Chaudhuri:

Over the last several years, the Committee has heard from many individuals in Indian Country about the disparate impact of domestic violence and human trafficking in Native communities. Tribal leaders and stakeholders rightfully feel that more should be done to address the needs of Native American victims of crime. By providing federal employees throughout Indian Country with additional training on how to recognize and respond to human trafficking and domestic violence, we believe your agencies can better address this growing concern.

Reports recently produced by the Department of Justice and the Government Accountability Office underscore the need for more victim services and public awareness. The Department of Justice estimates that nearly three million American Indian and Alaska Natives (AIAN) have experienced violence in their lifetime and are significantly more likely to experience intimate partner violence than their non-Native peers. Additional evidence uncovered by the Government Accountability Office indicates that AIANs are similarly at a higher risk of being targeted for human trafficking.

More education on how to identify these crimes and connect tribal community members to crime prevention and victim services resources is an important first step. It is imperative that individuals working on the public— including BIA law enforcement, IHS health care providers, and Indian gaming personnel— receive training to spot, stop, and respond to human trafficking and domestic violence in the communities they service.

We request that your Offices work in cooperation with the Department of Homeland Security's Blue Campaign and other partners, like the National Domestic Violence Hotline and the StrongHearts Native Helpline, to provide specific trainings for your employees on how to effectively identify and respond to instances of domestic violence and human trafficking.

We look forward to your prompt attention to this matter and to learning more about your Offices' efforts to combat these devastating crimes. Please contact Kim Moxley, Indian Affairs Committee Policy Advisor, at (202) 224-2251 or via e-mail at kim_moxley@indian.senate.gov with any questions.

Sincerely,



Tom Udall
Vice Chairman



Senator John Hoeven
Chairman



John McCain
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



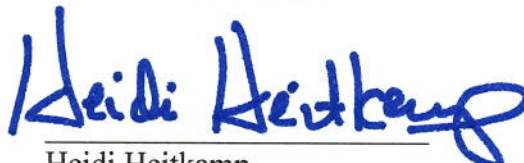
Jon Tester
United States Senator



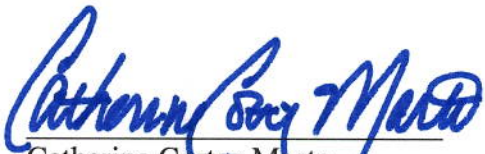
Al Franken
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Heidi Heitkamp
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator