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United States Senate

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March 25, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pence
Vice President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Vice President Pence,

I write to request that the federal government conduct and complete robust government-to-government consultations with the 22 federally recognized Tribes in Arizona in its response to COVID-19. It is critical that Tribal Nations receive adequate access to resources and information from the federal government to effectively prepare for and respond to the pandemic in their communities.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) notes American Indian and Alaska Natives are disproportionately impacted by health conditions that increases risk for a more serious COVID-19 illness. As we continue to see increasing confirmed COVID-19 positive cases in Indian Country, we must ensure Tribal Nations are involved in conversations determining the federal government's response to this virus in their communities.

On Navajo Nation, there has been a rapid transmission of COVID-19 cases confirmed. In less than three days, confirmed COVID-19 cases escalated from one to fourteen. As of March 24, 2020, there were 39 cases on Navajo Nation. Despite this, I have heard from members of the Navajo Nation that their communities do not have the testing kits nor personal protective equipment (PPE) needed to combat this virus.

I am concerned that the federal government's response to this health crisis thus far has not appropriately included Tribal Nations. For example, the CDC announced their plan on how to distribute the \$40 million set-aside funding for Tribes under H.R. 6074, the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental, without consulting Tribal Nations nor the CDC Tribal Advisory Committee. As a result, with the exception of the Navajo Nation, Tribes in Arizona may not see assistance or resources to meet their most immediate needs.

Moving forward in our efforts to combat COVID-19, we must ensure Tribal Nations have enough testing kits, PPE, and adequate access to information to protect members of their communities. It is crucial that the federal government work together with state, local, and tribal partners to tackle the threats and challenges presented by COVID-19. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kyrsten Sinema", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator