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United States Senate

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May 1, 2020

The Honorable Steven Mnuchin
Secretary of the Treasury
Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20220

The Honorable David Bernhardt
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Mnuchin and Secretary Bernhardt:

I am writing to urge the Treasury Department to immediately begin to disburse the \$8 billion from the Coronavirus Relief Fund established in Title V of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) to eligible federally recognized tribal governments.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) notes that American Indians and Alaska Natives are at a disproportionately higher risk for complications from COVID-19 due to health and socioeconomic disparities in their communities. As we continue to see increasing confirmed COVID-19 cases in Indian Country, we must ensure tribal nations have the resources to combat this virus in their communities.

Congress passed the CARES Act over a month ago, on March 27, 2020. Yet tribal governments have yet to receive this funding to cover their expenditures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Unlike state and local governments, tribes do not have a tax base to generate revenue. Funding for tribal programs come from the federal government or tribally owned enterprises. As a result of the pandemic, tribal governments offices are closed and tribes are not generating revenue to pay employees or fund vital services. Critical expenditures to protect public health and safety during the pandemic are depleting the funding for future vital services for Indian Country.

On April 27, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia issued a temporary injunction that prohibits the Treasury Department from disbursing Coronavirus Relief Fund money to Alaska Native Corporations. This decision does not prevent the Treasury Department from

releasing resources to federally recognized tribal and Alaska Native governments. I am concerned that the District Court's order has further delayed the disbursement of coronavirus relief funding for tribal governments. It is imperative that tribes in Arizona receive the appropriated resources in compliance with Congress's intention of providing funding for tribal governments to meet their most pressing needs.

Moving forward in our efforts to combat COVID-19, we must ensure tribal nations have enough testing kits, PPE, and resources to protect members of their communities. It is crucial that the federal government work together with state, local, and tribal partners to tackle the 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