



June 24,2019

Representative Ben Ray Luján
2323 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Luján,

Mah koo wham, Amehdahwah, Ya'at'eeh abinii, Greetings!

We are fellows from the Santa Fe Indian School Leadership Institute's Summer Policy Academy. We represent the Pueblos of Isleta, Santo Domingo, and the Navajo Nation. Currently we are in our second year of the Summer Policy Academy.

First, we would like to take the opportunity to express our appreciation to you for taking the time to give us the chance to express our concerns and to speak to you about the need for community planning in our tribal communities. We see that it is essential that our Indigenous communities have the funds and support needed for community planning to be carried out and implemented.

Historically, our communities were integrated with all the fundamental components needed for our communities to function in a cohesive, efficient and vibrant manner. These foundational elements made the community whole. Over the years, our communities have been exposed to several social, cultural and economic disruptions that have caused our communities to become fragmented. Our Indigenous communities have been experiencing detrimental challenges; such as violence, addiction, language loss, poverty and health disparities. These challenges are deeply embedded in the long history of policies and laws that were imposed on our families and communities. In the past, language, culture and core values provided that guidance.

Our Indigenous core values are being impacted by the lack of community planning. We have observed that our core values such as respect, spirituality, faith and love are not being practiced when tribal members are partaking in behavior such as alcohol and drug abuse, not speaking their language and when people are hurting their loved ones. We see that when there is an absence of community planning there is a high likelihood for our communities to continue operating in a dysfunctional manner, therefore encouraging our people to continue participating in behavior that is unfortunately becoming normalized in our communities. Community plans will provide guidance for community members, community programs and most important our tribal leadership. With financial support we can continue to support language programs, improve programs for drugs and alcohol and provide services to women that need social and economic support.

Therefore, our recommendations for supporting community planning efforts in our tribal communities is as follows:

- 1) Provide appropriations for community planning to all New Mexico Indigenous communities.
- 2) Funding should be provided directly to tribal communities to be used for the creation and implementation of Tribal Comprehensive Plans.
- 3) Funding should be provided to Institutions of Higher Education that provide education and training in Community Planning.

We as young people care about the wellbeing of our communities. It is a time to rebuild our communities. We are requesting that Congress make appropriations for community planning. When our communities are given the funding, we will have the opportunity to engage our people in restoring our health and wellbeing. You can be confident in knowing that it will be utilized by communities to make positive changes that will impact our future generations.

Many Blessings,

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