The Honorable Lamar Alexander  
United States Senate  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions  

The Honorable Patty Murray  
United States Senate  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions  

The Honorable Robert P. Casey, Jr.  

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  

Dear Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Murray, Senator Casey, and Senator Murkowski:

The undersigned organizations appreciate our ongoing negotiations and your efforts to reauthorize the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA). Because of the need for continued negotiation, we respectfully oppose including the reauthorization of FVPSA within a COVID-19 relief package. We continue to strongly oppose a straight reauthorization of FVPSA. We support bills that include more robust tribal enhancements to address the disparities of domestic violence in tribal communities, consistent with the enhancements contained in S. 2259 and H.R. 5041. Unfortunately, there has not been sufficient opportunity to advance the work on either bill in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. These bills, S. 2259 and H.R. 5041, expand grant programs and make many needed improvements so that more survivors have greater access to support and safety.

The FVPSA provides critical support for shelters, coalitions, training and technical assistance centers, children’s services, emergency response hotlines, and prevention initiatives. The FVPSA is the only federal grant program dedicated to domestic violence shelter and supportive services. FVPSA is the primary source of funding for these services for Indian tribes.

Because of COVID-19, it is now clearer than ever that more must be done to address the critical needs of survivors, their families, their communities, the advocates and programs that serve them. However, pushing the reauthorization language of S. 2971 into a COVID-19 relief bill through Amendment No. 2534 would not bridge the gaps that Native victims fall through,
especially during this pandemic. Instead, for the COVID-19 relief bill, please consider the bipartisan supported funding increases presented in the April 13, 2020, member letter to Senate leadership.¹

We appreciate ongoing negotiations to support a better pathway for providing Native victims with the advocacy services so desperately needed. We will continue to advocate on the importance of moving this critically needed legislation forward, ensuring that it aligns more closely with the actual needs of the victims we serve and the more fully enhanced provisions of S. 2259 and H.R. 5041.

The tribal improvements in S. 2259 and H.R. 5041 reflect the needs of domestic violence victims, the priorities of Indian tribes, and our coalition, which include but are not limited to the following:

- Increasing the overall funding authorization level to address very low per-program funding levels and provide access to FVPSA funds for more tribes and programs not currently funded.
- Strengthening the capacity of Indian Tribes to exercise their sovereign authority to more fully respond to domestic violence in their communities by increasing the current 10% tribal allocation to 12.5% off the top of appropriations.
- Authorizing recognition and meaningful funding for tribal coalitions to provide Indian tribes and tribal organizations with technical assistance and training on developing responses to domestic violence.
- Authorizing recognition and permanent funding for the currently funded Alaska Native Women’s Resource Center.
- Authorizing recognition and permanent, separate funding for the currently funded StrongHearts Native Helpline to serve as the national Indian domestic violence hotline.

As tribal organizations, we cannot support the straight reauthorization of FVPSA, S. 85 or S.2971 because both fall short of our calls for needed improvements and lifesaving enhancements to the law. We urge you to not include any of the S. 2971 FVPSA reauthorization language in a COVID-19 relief package but instead include the bipartisan supported emergency funding for domestic violence and sexual assault programs.

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