

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

May 6, 2019

Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General of the United States
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's (MMIW) crisis is devastating families and communities across the United States. Relevant Department of Justice databases indicate that more than 5,000 Native women were missing as of 2016. However, we believe that number is likely far higher, as MMIW cases are often underreported or misclassified.

Over the past six months, the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs and the House Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples convened oversight hearings to examine the federal response to the MMIW crisis. Members heard from federal officials, tribal leaders, and members of families directly impacted by the MMIW crisis; all agreed that failures in cross-jurisdictional coordination, inadequate MMIW reporting protocols, and poor data collection limit the effectiveness of efforts to track, investigate, and solve MMIW cases.

In addition, our Offices and the Committee have heard from tribal leaders and MMIW advocates that the MMIW crisis appears to be exacerbated by, and intertwined with, other factors including substance abuse, human trafficking, and domestic violence in Indian Country.


As Members of the Indian Affairs Committee and the Indigenous Peoples Subcommittee and Senators and Representatives representing the majority of federally recognized Tribes, we must do all we can to fully understand the extent of, and implement meaningful solutions to, the MMIW crisis. To that end, we request that the U.S. Government Accountability Office provide the following:

- 1) A review of federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies jurisdiction, including the facts that determine which law enforcement agency has jurisdiction over a case and inter-jurisdictional coordination best practices.
- 2) A review of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and other federal law enforcement agencies response policies and procedures related to missing and murdered Native Americans living on and off Indian lands.
- 3) Recommendations on improving the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and other federal agencies' policies for investigating and reporting missing and murdered Native Americans.
- 4) Recommendations for improving and better coordinating the Federal law enforcement MMIW response, as well as improving coordination with state, local, and tribal law enforcement.

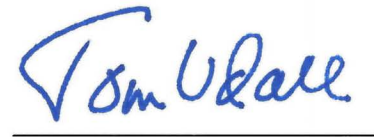
- 5) A review of the impact that law enforcement staffing levels may have on exacerbating the MMIW crisis or hindering federal, state, local, and tribal MMIW response.
- 6) A review of all databases relating to missing or murdered Indian persons, including an examination of all federal databases (e.g., National Crime Information Center database, the Combined DNA Index System, the Next Generation Identification System, and the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System) and the requirements for reporting information specifically pertinent to MMIW cases (e.g., tribal membership or affiliation) in such federal databases.
- 7) A review of federal, state, and tribal notification systems relating to missing persons, including notification systems used to alert other law enforcement agencies and those used to alert the public (e.g., the Criminal Justice Information Network, the AMBER Alert Program, and other relevant notification system).
- 8) Recommendations for improving access to missing person databases, and increasing technical assistance for tribal law enforcement.
- 9) Recommendations for improving and coordinating law enforcement and public notification systems.

Thank you for your timely attention to this request. We look forward to working with your Office on the information we need to better address the MMIW crisis and keep Native families safe. If you have any questions, please contact Laura Peterson at (202) 224-2644 or Laura_Peterson@tester.senate.gov.


Sincerely,



Jon Tester
United States Senator



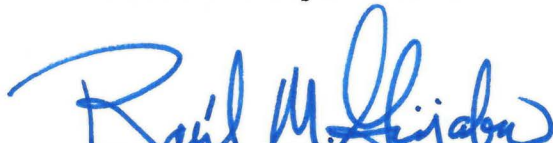
Tom Udall
United States Senator



Ruben Gallego
United States Representative



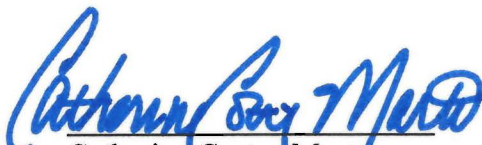
John Hoeven
United States Senator



Raúl M. Grijalva
United States Representative




Paul Cook
United States Representative





Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator

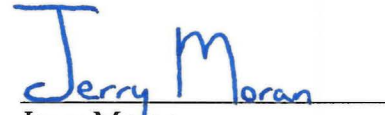


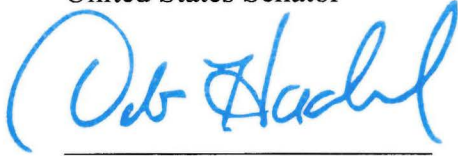
Tina Smith
United States Senator

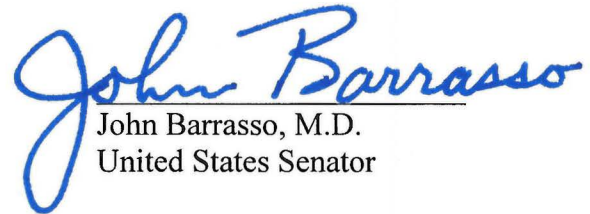

Matt Cartwright
United States Representative


Ed Case
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