

April 28, 2021

Rep. Tiffany Zulkosky
Chair, Tribal Affairs Committee
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Rep. Zulkosky,

We are writing to express our support for House Bill 38: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. We appreciate your leadership, partnership and action to protect our Alaska Native women, girls and two-spirit relatives.

As you know, there is a nationwide crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit relatives (MMIWG2S). The Center for Disease Control and Prevention has reported that murder is the third-leading cause of death among American Indian and Alaska Native women and that rates of violence on reservations and rural areas can be up to ten times higher than the national average. We are experiencing too many tragedies across our state and continue to see insufficient action by our state and law enforcement to adequately address this crisis (i.e. Florence Okpealuk, Nome and Debra Nictune, Fairbanks.)

In the 2018 study by Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI), Alaska as a state ranked fourth in the nation for the highest number of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls cases with Anchorage listed as having the third highest number of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in cities across the US. As of 2021, Alaska's documented cases by Data for Indigenous Justice are even higher- with 229 cases, 149 missing and 80 murdered. This is disturbing and heart breaking on so many levels. You have the power to change, to make a difference and to protect the lives of our Alaska Native women and girls, and all Alaskans.

One of the main goals of our organizations is to advocate for the wellness and protection of Alaska Native peoples. We need partners across the state from the Legislature and Governor, to troopers and police, to non-profits, Tribes, and communities to come together and be the voice for those who are being silenced

through these acts of violence. We are reaching out to seek your assistance and leadership to help us address the preventable violence happening in our state, to stand up for Alaska Native women and children, and to send a clear message that Alaska is a safe place for everyone.

House Bill 38 is an important step forward to direct the Police Standards Council to work with federally recognized Tribes; require the Department of Public Safety to write best practices for how to investigate a missing persons report involving Indigenous women; and create two liaison positions to work on cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

We are also asking you and your colleagues to consider some additional ideas and amendments to the bill to further Alaska's efforts in combating this crisis:

- Require the Department of Public Safety to conduct a study to determine how to increase state criminal justice protective and investigative resources for reporting and identifying missing and murdered Indigenous women in the state;
- Require training for all public safety officials – troopers, local police, village public safety officers - in government relations with Tribes, racial equity and culture;
- Establish a missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and two spirit relatives fatality review commission;
- Establish a grant program for Tribes that creates annual non-competitive direct funding to communities to address MMIWG2S and tribal public safety for self-determined local needs;
- Include requirements for interagency cooperation to establish state protocols for missing persons;
- Audits and reporting on law enforcement doing thorough investigations;
- Review of case management by law enforcement;
- Review of prosecution/judicial outcomes of homicides;
- Expand the definition of the bill to include missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit relatives.

We know that this will take a team-centered approach with everyone at the table – we stand ready to assist in any way possible to help see this legislation through to final passage.

Gunalchéesh/Háw'aa/Quyana/Mahsi'/Baasee'/Maasee'/Dogedinh/Thank you,

Kendra Kloster
Executive Director
Native Peoples Action



Tami Jerue
Executive Director
Alaska Native Women's
Resource Center

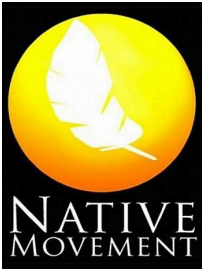


Charlene Aqpik Apok
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**DATA FOR
INDIGENOUS
JUSTICE**

Enei Begaye
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Cc: Tribal Affairs Committee