October 19, 2022

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| The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  Chair  House Appropriations Committee  H-307, The Capitol  Washington, D.C. 20515 | The Honorable Kay Granger  Ranking Member  House Appropriations Committee  2007 Rayburn House Office Building  Washington, D.C. 20515 |
| The Honorable Patrick Leahy  Chairman  Senate Appropriations Committee  S-146A, The Capitol  Washington, DC 20510 | The Honorable Richard Shelby  Ranking Member  Senate Appropriations Committee  S-128, The Capitol  Washington, DC 20510 |

**Re: Request for Inclusion of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior Language Regarding Tiwahe in the Final Fiscal Year 2023 Omnibus Package**

Dear Chair DeLauro, Ranking Member Granger, Chairman Leahy, and Ranking Member Shelby,

On behalf of the [INSERT TRIBE], I am writing to urge your Committees to work together to continue supporting the very important and effective Tiwahe Initiative (Tiwahe). More specifically, [INSERT TRIBE] requests that the Committees adopt the House Appropriations Committee language regarding Tiwahe in the final Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 omnibus package that you will pass this December.

**The Impact of [INSERT TRIBE’S] Participation as a Tiwahe Site / The Need of [INSERT TRIBE] to Participate in Tiwahe**

[INSERT EXPERIENCE IN TIWAHE OR DESIRE/NEED TO PARTICIPATE IN TIWAHE]

**The Need for Expansion of Tiwahe to Additional Tribes**

We need additional support to expand Tiwahe to additional Tribal communities throughout the United States. To-date, the Tiwahe pilot Tribes have been blessed with the support of Congress and other Tribal leaders. With this support, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) has echoed the importance of this Initiative. The 2021 BIA [report](https://www.bia.gov/sites/default/files/dup/assets/bia/ois/dhs/1%20-%20IA%20Tiwahe%20Final%20Report%20to%20Congress.pdf) to Congress specifically states:

“Tiwahe is an extensive and bold approach to furthering Indian self-determination and self-governance. It allows flexibility in the administration of key Tribal programs, supports Tribal economic self-sufficiency, and strengthens Tribal cultural connections. Tiwahe fosters systemic change in the delivery of services to children and families through the integration of Tribal practices, customs, values, and traditions. The Demonstration Project showed how Tiwahe offers Tribes the flexibility to design programming and services to address the gaps and needs of its communities. Further, Tiwahe focused on improving collaboration and coordination across core programs, such as Social Services, ICWA, Tribal Courts, RRI, HIP, and JPT. The creativity unleashed by the infusion of Tribal culture and traditions into practice and services is transforming the delivery of services within the Tiwahe communities, offering a model of practice for BIA to operationalize and for other federally recognized Tribes to adopt and implement.”

For this reason, it is critical to expand on the successes achieved by the original Tiwahe Tribes, as evidenced not only by the reports of the six pilot Tribes, but also BIA’s own report by expanding the Initiative to additional pilot sites by supporting the House recommendation for $8 million for Tiwahe expansion in the FY 2023 Interior appropriations bill. In anticipation of this language being enacted, BIA held a [Tribal consultation](https://www.bia.gov/sites/default/files/dup/tcinfo/dtll_tiwahe_consultations_8.12.22_508.pdf) on September 12, 2022, which was attended by more than 200 participants, to determine a methodology for selecting new pilot sites.

**House and Senate Appropriations Committee FY 2023 Language Regarding Tiwahe**

As previously mentioned, [INSERT TRIBE] is urging both Committees to adopt the language supporting Tiwahe in the House FY 2023 Interior appropriations bill, which provides funds to expand Tiwahe to additional Tribes. Specifically, the House’s FY 2023 Interior bill reads:

“*Tiwahe.—*In December 2021, Indian Affairs provided the report, Tiwahe: Final Report to Congress, in response to Congressional requests stemming back to fiscal year 2019. The report documents significant achievements, including a reduction in attempted and completed suicides, recidivism, and removal of children from the community. At the same time, the report notes earlier parent/child reunifications, language revitalization, and improvements to housing and homelessness among other improvements. For fiscal year 2023, the Committee provides additional funds to expand Tiwahe to other sites across various programs as noted below. The Committee expects BIA to continue funding existing Tiwahe programs for the same activities at the same amount, including funding to support women and children’s shelters. Note: amount provided for more tribes was $5 million under Social Services, and $3 million under ICWA, a total of $8 million in new funding for more tribes.”

The Senate Chairman’s Mark of the 2023 Interior bill, however, does not provide funds to expand Tiwahe to additional tribes. Instead, it continues providing funding for the existing pilot Tribes and calls on BIA to report on how to expand the program to additional Tribes. The bill reads:

“*Tiwahe.—*The Committee expects funding to existing Tiwahe pilot programs to continue in the same amounts to the same recipients, including funding to support women and children’s shelters. Finally, the Committee received the Federal and Tribal reports on the Tiwahe Initiative, which include recommendations on future action and expansion. The Bureau of Indian Affairs [BIA] is directed to submit a plan on how to expand the program to all Tribes incrementally along with a strategy on how to consider existing pilot programs during any expansion and be consistent with the final report and available funding. Further, as part of the expansion plan and strategy, the BIA is encouraged to explore the possibility of including all seven Virginia Tribes as a single consortium and who may be positioned to benefit as participants in future Tiwahe expansion plans.”

It is true that both bills recognize the need for expansion of Tiwahe. However, the House’s version more directly supports the requests of many Tribes both in their testimony before the House Appropriations Interior Subcommittee and BIA’s September 12, 2022 Tribal consultation, while the Senate’s version sits idle and requires further action from BIA before opening this much needed program to additional Tribal communities. Congress should not require further action from BIA. Through its recent Tribal consultation, BIA has proven that it is ready to expand the Initiative.

**History of Congressional Support for Tiwahe**

The Tiwahe Initiative began in 2015 to protect and promote the development of prosperous and resilient Tribal communities through the selection of six pilot sites in a five-year demonstration project. During much of the five-year demonstration period, the pilot Tribes developed their programs and services under the radar, because even though Congress supported it, the previous Administration did not.

In FYs 2019, 2020, and 2021, Congress requested a final report from BIA on Tiwahe, including measures of success. Congress acknowledged they have heard from numerous Tribes that they would like to see Tiwahe expanded to additional sites, and Congress wanted to evaluate the report before considering expansion. In 2020, the pilot Tribes began working on a comprehensive report to Congress on Tiwahe, in part because of concerns that the BIA was not being responsive to Congress, and that the original six pilot sites were worried that Congress might discontinue funding. The report was meant to include measures of success, as well as an outside, independent evaluation of Tiwahe by FHI-360. The pilot tribes completed their Tiwahe reports and transmitted them to Congress and BIA in 2021. Congress acknowledged they received the Tribes’ reports.

In early 2021, BIA reached out to the pilot Tribes for assistance and advice on preparation of the BIA’s Tiwahe report as requested by Congress. This was prompted in part by Congress’ withholding of $1 million in 2021 funding for Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs office operations because of failure to provide the requested BIA report. In partnership with the pilot tribes The BIA completed its Tiwahe report and transmitted it to Congress in December 2021. Acknowledging receipt of BIA’s report, Congress enacted additional funding for two more Tiwahe pilot sites in FY 2022.

Following this, the Tribal Interior Budget Council (TIBC) requested additional funding for 10 more pilot tribes, and other new Tiwahe funding in FY 2023. The FY 2023 President’s budget agreed to the TIBC request and requested funding for 10 additional pilot tribes, building upon the FY 2022 Congressional provision for two new pilot tribes. The Administration also requested additional Tiwahe funding in other categories including Housing Improvement Program, and for Healing to Wellness courts and Economic Development. Both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees recognized the need for continued funding. However, only the House bill provided funding for the addition of new Tiwahe sites in FY 2023.

**Conclusion**

[INSERT TRIBE’S], in partnership with the original Tiwahe pilot sites, urge the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to continue working together to support Tiwahe by adopting the House’s FY 2023 Interior appropriations bill which directly provides funding for new pilot sites. The pilot Tribe have proven first hand that this Initiative is effective and is providing a real and lasting change in their communities. However, we cannot sit idle in expanding this important Initiative to other Tribes who desperately need and would greatly benefit from the flexibility that Tiwahe provides. We need your help to ensure Indian Country as a whole can benefit from this Initiative and we look forward to working with your Committees to ensure this happens.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to the priorities of [INSERT TRIBE] as it pertains to Tiwahe. Should you have any questions, please contact [INSERT CONTACT INFORMATION].

Sincerely,

[INSERT SIGNATURE]

CC

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY)

House Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior

Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior

House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Indigenous Peoples

Senate Committee on Indian Affairs