

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 13, 2023

The Honorable Merrick B. Garland  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Garland:

Thank you for your continued commitment to bringing justice to the grieving communities of Missing or Murdered Indigenous Women and People (MMIP). While we are greatly encouraged that the Department of Justice (DOJ) recently launched a MMIP Regional Outreach Program, we are disappointed that California was excluded from the list of states to receive dedicated MMIP personnel, particularly given that California has the largest population of Native Americans of any state in the nation and the fifth largest caseload of MMIP. Therefore, we ask that you place dedicated MMIP personnel in U.S. Attorneys' Offices in California, just as you have in ten other states.

California Tribes are already at a disadvantage when it comes to addressing public safety and advancing justice for their citizens. In 1953, Congress enacted Public Law 83-280, often referred to as "PL-280," over the unanimous objection of Tribal governments and without any meaningful tribal consultation. The law ceded criminal jurisdiction over tribal lands from the federal government, mandating this transfer of jurisdiction only in California and five other states. Notably, when PL-280 passed, it did not provide any additional resources to states to offset the assumption of this new jurisdiction. Further, the Bureau of Indian Affairs does not provide federal law enforcement funding to tribes in PL-280 states as they do with tribes in non-PL-280 states. As a result, PL-280 has created jurisdictional challenges that result in crimes, particularly those committed by non-Native individuals, going uninvestigated and unpunished.

In addition to California tribal communities being denied federal law enforcement resources as a result of PL-280, many DOJ and other federal initiatives routinely overlook California Tribes, harming their efforts to combat the MMIP crisis. For example, former Attorney General Barr announced in 2019 that he was launching a national strategy to address MMIP, providing \$1.5 million to place MMIP coordinators in U.S. Attorneys' Offices in eleven states. However, a dedicated MMIP coordinator was not placed in California; instead, California was assigned to three different federal coordinators, splitting the state into three parts and attaching them to other regions of the country. No California Tribe or advocate has reported receiving support from these coordinators.

We, alongside California Tribal leaders and advocates, were heartened to see the *Not Invisible Act* Commission in Northern California in June 2023, where federal agents, commissioners, and staff from the DOJ and Department of the Interior heard testimony from traumatized survivors of MMIP over two days. Because we have such a high rate of MMIP, the *Not Invisible Act* Commission selected California as one of six sites in which to hold hearings. We hope the DOJ

can build off of this success by placing MMIP personnel in U.S. Attorneys' Offices in California to address the significant need for additional federal resources to confront this crisis.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and please let us know if we can be helpful in fulfilling this request.

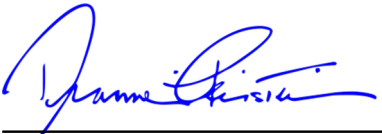
Sincerely,



Alex Padilla  
United States Senator



Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



Sydney Kamlager-Dove  
Member of Congress



Mike Thompson  
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress



Katie Porter  
Member of Congress

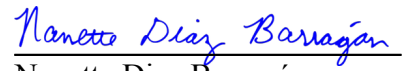


Grace F. Napolitano  
Member of Congress



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Adam B. Schiff  
Member of Congress



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Nanette Diaz Barragán  
Member of Congress



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Jim Costa  
Member of Congress



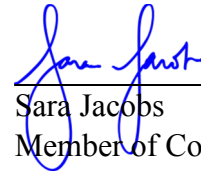
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Norma J. Torres  
Member of Congress



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Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress



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Sara Jacobs  
Member of Congress