**SAMPLE LETTER- PLACE ON YOUR LETTERHEAD**

[INSERT DATE]

The Honorable\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

XX House/ Senate Office Building

Washington, DC

Dear Representative/Senator\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_:

Since March 1, 2013, millions of dollars have been lost from programs dedicated to serving American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs) due of the federal sequestration process. [**INSERT NAME OF TRIBE/TRIBAL ORGANIZATION HERE]** stands firmly with National Indian Health Board (NIHB), all 567 federally-recognized Tribal governments and more than 4 million AI/ANs to vehemently express our opposition any cuts to AI/AN programs. We continue to urge Congress to find a reasonable and thoughtful resolution and approach to balancing the federal budget. We ask you to co-sponsor **[S. 1497 or H.R. 3063]** to exempt the Indian Health Service and the Bureau of Indian Affairs from further sequestration cuts.

Through sequestration, many federal programs and services, including those for AI/ANs, have seen significant and devastating budget cuts. We urge Congress to uphold the Federal government’s trust responsibility ***and exempt the Indian Health Service and Bureau of Indian Affairs from future sequestration cuts.***

When across-the-board sequestration occurred in 2013, all other federal programs that serve the health of our nation’s populations with the highest need, such as Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, the Children’s Health Insurance Program, and the Veterans Administration, were exempt from funding reductions. But, not the Indian Health Service (IHS). The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) stated that the IHS, the agency that is responsible for overseeing the delivery of health care to Tribal members of 567 federally recognized Indian Tribes, Bands, and Alaska Native villages in the United States, was subject to a 5.1% reduction. This loss of over $219 million out of the IHS budget translated into a reduction of primary health care and disease prevention services for AI/ANs. The budget crisis in the United States has not been because of the nation’s obligation to Indian Tribes, and our people should not be made to suffer because of unrelated political issues.

For example, in 2013, one Tribe in Wisconsin has appointments backed up to 4 months because of the cuts made during the Sequester. Some of the providers furloughed at that facility chose not to return when their contracts were offered leaving the community without crucial providers. Because of the employment uncertainty, nurses on a reservation in rural Michigan chose to resign leaving behind a net loss of 3,000 nursing visits and 200 diabetes specialty clinical visits. Because of Sequestration cuts, a tribal school in Minnesota was unable to fill two Wellness Counsellor positions and soon after, two 14 year old middle school students committed suicide. Sequestration and the cuts to Indian Health are costing human lives and we cannot bear to lose more lives when we can exempt IHS from Sequestration. We cannot put our communities through another across the board cut like we saw in 2013 because the affects would only serve to burden communities further.

. **(Please add a few sentences and tell your story of what the sequester would mean for the health of people in your Tribe, Tribal Organization, or community)**

Throughout the 114th Congress, many opportunities to strengthen the Trust responsibility for Native health will arise. We urge you to co-sponsor **[S. 1497 or H.R. 3063]** to **restore** funding to Indian health programs and work with your Congressional colleagues to protect the IHS budget and those programmatic budgets on which AI/AN people rely.

Sincerely,

**[INSERT NAME**

**TITLE]**