

Shelley Buck
President



Lucy Taylor
Vice President

Johnny Johnson
Secretary

Valentina Mgeni
Treasurer

Michael Childs Jr.
Assistant Secretary/Treasurer

April 20th, 2020

Secretary Steven Mnuchin
United States Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20220

Secretary David Bernhardt
United States Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Re: CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund Tribal Submission Concerns

Dear Secretary Mnuchin and Secretary Bernhardt:

On behalf of the Prairie Island Indian Community I am writing you today to address two issues related to the CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund tribal submissions/certifications that were due on April 17, 2020. This letter is in follow up to our previous letters dated April 8th, and April 13th, 2020.

First, we have learned that information provided to the Department of Treasury was leaked publicly on April 17, 2020. We are disturbed and upset by this development. This unauthorized release of data is unacceptable and adds strain on the ability of Tribal nations to trust and have confidence in the security of their private data when shared with the Federal government and its agencies. We need assurances that show us that our data is being handled in a confidential, secure and safe manner. The Department of Treasury and the Department of Interior must immediately implement more appropriate safeguards. Furthermore, a full-scale investigation should be conducted immediately to identify the cause of the leak of data.

Second, we are frustrated by the lack of transparency and guidance regarding how the Department of Treasury is going to allocate the \$8 billion CRF dollars amongst tribes (and as we have already expressed, we do NOT believe that Alaska Native Corporations should be eligible to receive CRF funding). Amongst Indian Country there has been much confusion and

concern regarding what is considered an allowable “expenditure” as related to the question on the certification form that was provided to each tribal nation wishing to be eligible for the coronavirus relief fund.

There was no guidance issued on this issue. As a result, the likelihood is high that tribes applied different definitions and that the Department of Treasury received very different data sets, making any standard auditing practice down the road potentially prejudicial depending on how a tribe answered the question. To the extent necessary to alleviate hardship or limit issues related to the funding, tribes should be allowed to justify or adjust their responses as necessary during any auditing process for the funding.

We do understand that these are unprecedented times, however, the issues identified in this letter must be remedied. We are grateful for the \$8B Coronavirus Relief Fund appropriation for Tribal Nations, and we would like to thank you for your work to expeditiously to implement the distribution of these much-needed relief funds to Indian Country.

Should you have any questions please contact our government relations team at 651-212-1087 or cody.whitebear@piic.org.

Respectfully Submitted,



Shelley Buck
President
Prairie Island Indian Community

Cc: Senator Tina Smith
Senator Amy Klobuchar
Rep. Betty McCollum
Rep. Angie Craig
Rep. Jim Hagedorn