



USET

SOVEREIGNTY PROTECTION FUND

Nashville TN Office
711 Stewarts Ferry Pike, Ste. 100
Nashville TN 37214
P: (615) 872-7900
F: (615) 872-7417

Washington DC Office
400 North Capitol St., Ste. 585
Washington DC 20001
P: (202) 624-3550
F: (202) 393-5218

April 17, 2018

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
United States Senate
317 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Warren,

We write on behalf of United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF) to convey our strong support for the Comprehensive Addiction Resources Emergency (CARE) Act of 2018. As you know, USET SPF Tribal Nations, and Tribal Nations across the country, continue to experience the destructive effects of opioid abuse and addiction--often at higher rates than non-Indian communities. Yet, previous Congressional efforts aimed at directing resources toward this crisis nationwide, including the 21st Century Cures Act, have either excluded Indian Country entirely or fallen short of providing sufficient levels of funding. In response to Tribal concerns and priorities, the CARE Act of 2018 would ensure Tribal Nations, like other units of government, are well-equipped to combat the opioid epidemic and other substance use disorders in our communities.

USET SPF is a non-profit, inter-tribal organization representing 27 federally recognized Tribal Nations from Texas across to Florida and up to Maine¹. Both individually, as well as collectively through USET SPF, our member Tribal Nations work to improve health care services for American Indians. Our member Tribal Nations operate in the Nashville Area of the Indian Health Service, which contains 36 IHS and Tribal health care facilities. Our citizens receive health care services both directly at IHS facilities, as well as in Tribally-operated facilities under contracts with IHS pursuant to the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA), P.L. 93-638.

The CARE Act acknowledges Tribal sovereignty and the trust obligation by ensuring Tribal Nations have access to substantial direct funding and other resources to treat addiction through provisions, including:

- A 10% set-aside from all major grant programs established in the bill to be administered by the Indian Health Service and delivered via formula funding;
- Strong Tribal consultation requirements regarding composition of the distribution formula, funding uses, and application requirements;
- \$6 million for data collection and health surveillance at regional Tribal Epidemiology Centers; and

¹ USET SPF member Tribal Nations include: Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas (TX), Aroostook Band of Micmac Indians (ME), Catawba Indian Nation (SC), Cayuga Nation (NY), Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana (LA), Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana (LA), Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (NC), Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians (ME), Jena Band of Choctaw Indians (LA), Mashantucket Pequot Indian Tribe (CT), Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe (MA), Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida (FL), Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MS), Mohegan Tribe of Indians of Connecticut (CT), Narragansett Indian Tribe (RI), Oneida Indian Nation (NY), Pamunkey Indian Tribe (VA), Passamaquoddy Tribe at Indian Township (ME), Passamaquoddy Tribe at Pleasant Point (ME), Penobscot Indian Nation (ME), Poarch Band of Creek Indians (AL), Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe (NY), Seminole Tribe of Florida (FL), Seneca Nation of Indians (NY), Shinnecock Indian Nation (NY), Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana (LA), and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) (MA).

- A requirement for GAO to conduct a study examining the impacts of deferred care on the opioid crisis in Indian country

In total, this bill would provide approximately \$800 million annually over a period of ten years directly to Indian Country to address the disproportionate impacts opioid abuse and addiction is having in our communities. This level of funding and its method of delivery are reflective of a strong commitment to recognizing our governmental status and the unique relationship between the federal government and Tribal Nations.

USET SPF commends Senator Warren for her commitment to working with Indian Country during the drafting and introduction of the CARE Act. Again, we strongly support this legislation and call upon Congress for its swift passage. Should you have questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact Ms. Liz Malerba, USET SPF Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs, at LMalerba@usetinc.org or 202-624-3550.

Sincerely,



Kirk Francis
President



Kitcki A. Carroll
Executive Director