



House Tribal Affairs Committee  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99081

Re: HB 123 – State Recognition of Tribes

April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021

Dear Chair Zulkosky and Members of the House Tribal Affairs Committee:

Planned Parenthood Votes Northwest and Hawai'i ("PPVNH") writes today in support of HB 123, a bill to formally grant state recognition of federally recognized tribes. This policy is a critical first step to developing formal partnerships between the state of Alaska and Alaska Native tribes and bring healing and recognition to the state's 229 federally recognized tribes.

Planned Parenthood's goal of achieving health equity – including access to quality, affordable, culturally competent health care – requires actively dismantling systems that marginalize, oppress, and disenfranchise Indigenous and Native peoples. It is critical to address the violence Indigenous and Native communities continue to endure as a result of colonialism and racism and to acknowledge the enormous contributions these communities continue to make to this country. Indigenous and Native people have historically faced structural barriers to reproductive freedom due to a history of forced sterilization, family separation at the hands of the government. Formally recognizing federally recognized tribes is a critical step forward to undoing systemic racism that allows these systems to persist and place barriers to health equity.

For many years, and even today, states have inflicted trauma on Indigenous and Native people many times over by failing to recognize or respect the sovereign status of tribal nations. While the federal government legally recognizes the sovereignty of 229 Tribes, Alaska does not formally recognize tribes as independent, sovereign nations or interact with them as such. This not only leads to a patchwork of legal and governing structures, but also contributes to an ongoing source of source of trauma for Indigenous and Native people. This patchwork and systemic discrimination compounds many of the health struggles facing Indigenous and Native people today, such as high rates of depression and suicide, an epidemic of sexual assault and domestic violence, and high rates of maternal mortality.

Alaska's formal recognition is a step in the process of centering Indigenous and Native people in decision-making that will open more opportunities for better working relationships between Tribal and state governments. HB 123's progress toward true tribal self-determination is critical to achieving equity, improving health outcomes, and healing.

Sincerely,

Morgan Lim  
Alaska Government Relations Manager  
Planned Parenthood Votes Northwest & Hawai'i

31 March 2021

Rep. Tiffany Zulkosky  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Rep. Zulkosky,

I am writing today to express my strong support for HB 123- An Act Providing for State Recognition of Federally Recognized Tribes.

As Indigenous peoples, when we say we are from a certain place, we are referring to origin stories where our peoples were created from the lands which they are from. These deep connections come from time immemorial and have taught us we are stewards of the lands and waters for the next generations.

Alaska Native peoples have taken this responsibility as sovereign governments since before outside contact, before statehood, and continue to enact these rights today. Yet, the 229 federally recognized Tribes here in Alaska are not recognized by the state. This is an issue which we should not even need a bill for. Government-to-government relationships should already be in place.

Alaska Native peoples contribute to and lead many important sectors in the state, including an extraordinary tribal health care system that is unlike any in the nation. Our peoples and cultures provide a rich history to all Alaskans through the sharing of our values and lifeways. We can do much more to serve our people when we are able to self-determine and create the solutions and future for the next generations. When we do this it contributes positively for all Alaskans.

I strongly encourage all legislators to join you in solidifying strong and respectful relations between Tribal and state governments. This recognition is an important step for all Alaskans, we look forward to seeing this support come through from all legislators.

Quyana / Thank you!

Dr. Charlene Apok  
Anchorage, AK