

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
COMMERCE
HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

April 10, 2020

The Honorable Steven Mnuchin
Secretary of Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20220

The Honorable David Bernhardt
Secretary of the Interior
1849 C St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Mnuchin and Secretary Bernhardt:

On behalf of the 11 Tribal Nations in the State of Wisconsin, I write to request that Treasury and the Department of Interior ensure an equitable distribution of the Tribal Coronavirus Relief Fund, created by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (P.L. 116-136), that is based on actual economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the CARES Act, Congress established an \$8 billion relief fund for Tribal governments and Tribally-owned entities of those governments to use for expenditures incurred due to our current public health emergency in the face of revenue declines. The CARES Act requires Treasury to develop a funding distribution model for this fund based on identified need and in consultation with Interior and Tribes.

Unlike State and local governments, Tribal governments have no tax base to call upon in the event of a closure of their economic enterprises. The results in native communities are catastrophic: government services, including healthcare, have seen dramatic decreases in funding—even as demand for these services surge.

Wisconsin Tribes, big and small, urban and rural, gaming and non-gaming, believe that this fund must be responsibly distributed among Tribes in a way that ensures that their government programs can continue to operate at 2019 levels.

Further, there is broad consensus that this fund must be used to help Tribal governments support their employees during this difficult time. In the event that Tribal governments are forced to lay off their workforce due to declining revenues, this fund must be used to help cover the costs of unemployment insurance and rehiring these individuals at a later date. It is also imperative that funding takes into consideration additional costs tribes are having to incur, such as increased elder home services, and a decline in revenue and reimbursements from drastic drops in patient utilization of medical and dental clinics as a result of guidelines passed down from both federal and state governments.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and for fully considering the recommendations of the Tribal nations in Wisconsin. I appreciate your ongoing effort to consult with Tribal leaders on this matter, and thank you for your expeditious work in providing funding to address the urgent need in Indian Country.

Sincerely,



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator