Date

The Honorable Reginald Jones-Sawyer

Assembly Public Safety Committee

1021 O Street, Suite 5210

Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: AB 44 (Ramos) Tribal Public Safety: Support**

Dear Assemblymember Jones-Sawyer,

I am writing you today on behalf of *Tribe* *name* in support of AB 44 (Ramos). This important legislation will strengthen the capacity of tribal courts and tribal law enforcement, while safeguarding the ability of tribes to ensure public safety for their people.

*Add information about your Tribe and connection to this issue.*

California has the largest population of Native Americans of any state in the United States. California is facing increasing public safety challenges and the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Persons (MMIWP). Indigenous Persons, especially Indigenous Women and Girls, are disproportionately affected by violence, human trafficking, and murder, and become “missing” at much higher rates than people of other racial groups.) California has the fifth largest caseload of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and People. More than 4 in 5 American Indian and Alaska Native women have experienced violence in their lifetime and more than 1 in 3 in the last year. Additionally, 1 in 130 Native American children likely go missing each year.

Studies have shown that public safety improves when Tribal Nations have the resources to enforce their own laws and to protect their people. However, current California State law presents barriers for Tribes to strengthen their public safety systems. Existing federal law recognizes that Indian Tribes retain inherent sovereign authority over their lands, including the authority to exercise tribal law enforcement. The federal government and thirteen other states, excluding California, provide tribal law enforcement authority to enforce state or federal law if said officers meet certain qualifications. Because no such law exists in California, tribal police in this State are reliant on local county sheriffs to decide if and when a tribal officer will be deputized as a sheriff’s deputy, and such agreements can be limited or terminated at the discretion of the sheriff at any time.

Tribal police departments and courts need access to the California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS) in order to enter, verify, and update missing person’s information. Currently only a couple of tribal law enforcement departments have access to CLETS as a result of their Deputation Agreement with their county sheriff or the Bureau of Indian Affairs. No California tribal court has access to CLETS. This lack of access means that tribal police departments and tribal courts are unable to search and access in real-time the criminal history, outstanding warrants and/or restraining orders related to specific individuals and cases. Without tribal access to CLETS, tribal courts and tribal law enforcement cannot enter domestic violence protective orders, emergency protective orders, or other restraining orders, limiting the ability of county and state law enforcement to protect tribal people.

This bill will address the crisis of MMIWP by strengthening public safety in tribal communities. It would authorize, but not require, tribal police officers working for federally recognized tribes in California to hold state peace officer status, so long as they meet Police Officer Standards and Training (POST) qualifications, with the benefits and privileges that accompany that status. It will also grant qualified tribal police and tribal courts access to the CLETS. These two changes will advance tribal public safety and justice systems overall.

Thank you for your continued collaborative efforts with tribal communities to ensure their safety and wellbeing. For these reasons we are pleased to support AB 44 (Ramos). Thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

*Insert signature*

*Name Tribe*