

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 24, 2009

Thomas Frieden, MD, MPH
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Rd
Atlanta, GA 30333

Dear Director Frieden:

We are writing to express our concern over the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's insufficient support of HIV prevention activities in American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities and request that you take action to remedy this situation.

As you know, the CDC is charged with providing culturally relevant capacity building assistance and training to community-based organizations as a key strategy for the promotion and sustainability of health prevention programs. In spite of this, Native peoples were excluded as a distinct priority population from CDC's recent grant cycle for HIV capacity health prevention services. This drastic departure from the practices of previous grant cycles represents the deprioritization of the health and prevention needs of American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian communities.

This policy decision by the CDC strips Native people of one of the few resources and services that are currently available to them. Yet American Indians and Alaska Natives have the third highest rate of new HIV infections in the country after African Americans and Latinos. Pacific Islanders and Asians have the fourth highest rate. American Indians and Alaska Native have the shortest survival rate, followed by Native Hawaiians. These statistics do not support the de-prioritization of these target populations.

The National Native American AIDS Prevention Center (NNAAPC) is the only national, Native-specific agency that is working solely on curbing the impact and spread of HIV/AIDS in Native communities. NNAAPC has been funded by the CDC for the past 22 years to develop materials, provide training and serve as the lead capacity building agent for Native communities. CDC's lack of support for this organization has already resulted in staff layoffs, with the probability that NNAAPC will be closing its doors altogether within the next two months.

We believe it is imperative that specific funding be committed to fighting HIV/AIDS in Native communities. Rather than asking that NNAAPC's funding be restored through the CDC's current grant process that requires them to compete against providers that serve broader communities, we believe it would be more appropriate for CDC to create specific funding for a National Native HIV/AIDS Resource Center including such areas as prevention, data collections, training and technical assistance activities in Native communities. As part of this, we request that you partner with NNAAPC to ensure they can continue to lead the way in innovative and culturally appropriate prevention.

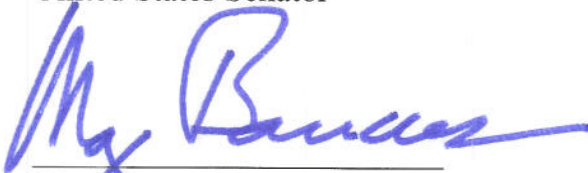
Sincerely,



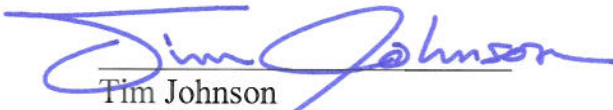
Daniel K. Akaka
United States Senator



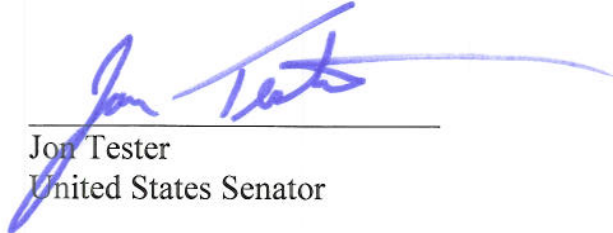
Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator



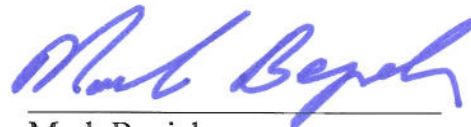
Max Baucus
United States Senator



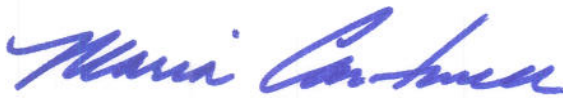
Tim Johnson
United States Senator



Jon Tester
United States Senator



Mark Begich
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator