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September 12, 2023

The Honorable Don Bacon
U.S. House of Representatives
2104 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
U.S. House of Representatives
2207 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Dan Kildee
U.S. House of Representatives
200 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mary Peltola
U.S. House of Representatives
153 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Judy Chu
U.S. House of Representatives
2423 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Sharice Davids
U.S. House of Representatives
2435 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Doug LaMalfa
U.S. House of Representatives
408 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Schweikert
U.S. House of Representatives
460 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representatives Bacon, Chu, Cole, Davids, Kildee, LaMalfa, Peltola, and Schweikert:

On behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), a non-profit professional organization of 67,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical sub-specialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults, I am writing to express our strong support for H.R. 3461, the *Strengthening Tribal Families Act of 2023*, which would enhance the capacity of state and local child welfare agencies to robustly implement the *Indian Child Welfare Act* (ICWA).

The AAP is a steadfast supporter of ICWA, a 44-year-old federal law that protects the wellbeing of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) children, and the AAP is grateful the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brackeen v. Haaland* recognized this and upheld ICWA. ICWA reaffirms the rights of Tribal nations to be involved in child welfare matters, while also keeping AI/AN children connected to their community and culture. It has been recognized as a gold standard of child welfare law and has been crucial for promoting the health, development, and wellbeing of AI/AN children.

While ICWA plays a critical role in promoting continuity of connection to family and culture, Tribal children are still more likely to enter the foster care system compared to the general population. Implementation of ICWA also varies significantly by state. Effective implementation of ICWA is critical to promoting the health and wellbeing of AI/AN children.

The AAP supports the *Strengthening Tribal Families Act of 2023*, which would require states to include compliance with ICWA in their Social Security Title IV-B child welfare plans. The bill also requires that the Children's Bureau include these efforts in its Child and Family Service Review (CSFR) process. This will create a meaningful ICWA compliance role for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and ensure state IV-B agencies are appropriately implementing ICWA. Currently, HHS lacks the authority to ensure states comply with ICWA standards, and there is very little federal data collection on the effectiveness of state implementation.

Thank you for your leadership on this important legislation that would benefit public health and AI/AN child health. If the AAP can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact Zach Laris in our Washington, D.C. office at 202/347-8600 or zlaris@aap.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sandy L. Chung". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Sandy L. Chung, MD, FAAP
President

SC/zml