



## Arizona House of Representatives

Phoenix, Arizona 85007

June 5, 2026

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy Jr.  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Ave SW  
Washington, DC 20201

RE: Protect the Indian Health Service Tucson Area Office

Dear Secretary Kennedy,

On behalf of the Democratic Caucuses of the Arizona Legislature, we write to express our strong opposition to the proposed closure and consolidation of the Indian Health Service (IHS) Tucson Area Office into the Phoenix Area Office.

This proposal has generated significant concern among Tribal Nations, Native organizations, healthcare providers, local elected officials, and community members throughout Southern Arizona. We share those concerns and respectfully urge the Department of Health and Human Services and the Indian Health Service to suspend any plans to close the Tucson Area Office until meaningful Tribal consultation has occurred and a transparent analysis of the impacts has been completed.

The federal government has a unique trust responsibility to Tribal Nations. Any decision that affects healthcare access, service delivery, or tribal self-determination must be made in partnership with Tribal governments and the Native communities that rely on these services. Tribal leaders have raised serious concerns regarding the consultation process and whether their voices have been adequately heard before advancing this proposal.

The Tucson Area Office plays a critical role in supporting healthcare delivery for the Pascua Yaqui Tribe, the Tohono O'odham Nation, and thousands of Native people throughout Southern Arizona. The office provides technical assistance, coordination, oversight, and support that help ensure healthcare services are responsive to local needs and community realities.

The Tucson Area Office also serves as an important connection to urban Native populations through organizations such as the Tucson Indian Center. For decades, the Tucson Indian Center has provided culturally responsive services including health referrals, behavioral health support, transportation assistance, enrollment services, case management, education, and advocacy. These services are essential to the health and well-being of Native families living both on and off tribal lands.

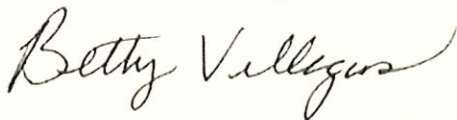
While efficiency and administrative streamlining are often cited as reasons for agency reorganization, efficiency cannot come at the expense of accessibility, local relationships, cultural responsiveness, or the federal trust responsibility. We are concerned that relocating decision-making and administrative functions farther from the communities they serve may create additional barriers to care and reduce the effectiveness of services that Native communities depend upon.

We stand with the Tribal leaders, Native organizations, healthcare advocates, and our federal, state, and local elected officials who have called for greater transparency and consultation regarding this proposal. We respectfully request that HHS and IHS halt implementation of the closure, engage in meaningful government-to-government consultation with affected Tribal Nations, and publicly demonstrate how healthcare access and service quality will be maintained or improved before any final decision is made.

Arizona's Native communities deserve healthcare systems that are accessible, culturally grounded, and developed in partnership with the people they serve. We urge you to reconsider this proposal and work collaboratively with Tribal Nations and community stakeholders to protect these vital services.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



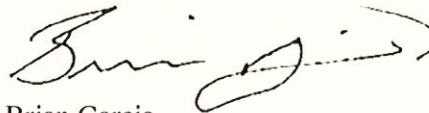
Betty J. Villegas  
Arizona State Representative, District 20



Myron Tsosie  
Arizona State Representative, District 6  
Member, Navajo Nation



Theresa Hatathlie  
Arizona State Senator, District 6  
Member, Navajo Nation



Brian Garcia  
Arizona State Representative, District 8  
Member, Pascua Yaqui Tribe



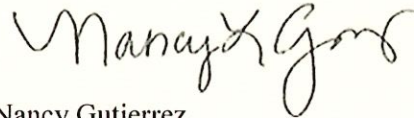
Mae Peshlakai  
Arizona State Representative, District 6  
Member, Navajo Nation



Oscar De Los Santos  
Arizona State Representative, District 11  
Democratic Leader



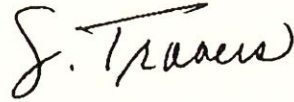
Priya Sundareshan  
Arizona State Senator, District 18  
Democratic Leader



Nancy Gutierrez  
Arizona State Representative, District 18  
Assistant Democratic Leader



Catherine Miranda  
Arizona State Senator, District 11  
Assistant Democratic Leader



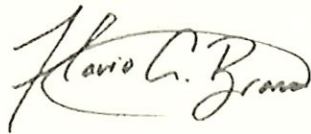
Stacey Travers  
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Lela Alston  
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Rosanna Gabaldón  
Arizona State Senator, District 21  
Democratic Whip



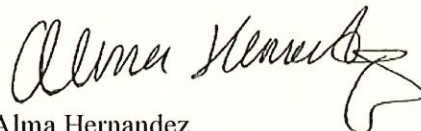
Flavio Bravo  
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Christopher Mathis  
Arizona State Representative, District 18



Junelle Cavero  
Arizona State Representative, District 11



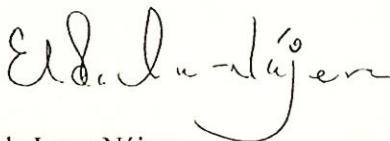
Alma Hernandez  
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Elda Luna-Nájera  
Arizona State Representative, District 22



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Arizona State Representative, District 26

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Arizona State Representative, District 24

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