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Mr. Kevin Washburn
Team Lead
Biden-Harris Transition Team for the Department of the Interior

Dear Mr. Washburn,

I greatly appreciate your commitment to ensuring a smooth transition of power to the Biden-Harris administration through your work on the transition team focusing on the Department of the Interior. The Department of the Interior plays a critical role in the administration and management of federal lands and in coordinating government-to-government relationships with and services for federally recognized tribes. It is absolutely vital that the incoming secretary has a firm understanding of the department's responsibilities and duties to tribes and has significant experience working and living in Indian Country. I strongly recommend that you consider nominating Representative Deb Haaland, a congresswoman from New Mexico and an enrolled member of the Pueblo of Laguna, as Secretary of the Department of the Interior.

In 2018, Rep. Haaland and I were the first two Native women ever elected to Congress, but she has been a fierce advocate and organizer in Indian Country for decades. She has extensive experience in business development in Indian Country while maintaining her lifelong commitment to environmentally conscious business and policy practices. She has worked in tribal and local administration and social services and organized in Native communities and at the state level. And this is all before her incredible body of work during her time in Congress.

As Vice Chair of the House Natural Resources Committee, Rep. Haaland has worked across the aisle and with both chambers to achieve real victories for Indian Country today and has demonstrated incredible vision for its future. Her legislative achievements touch on everything from the crisis of murdered and missing Indigenous women to the conservation and preservation of public lands to addressing the chronic underfunding and mismanagement of federal resources for Indian Country. She maintains a deep understanding of both the realities and challenges that Native communities face across the country as well as the hope and potential they contain with improved federal resources, consultation, and respect for tribal sovereignty.

As chair of the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands, Rep. Haaland has been a champion for our environment and a leader in the fight against climate change. She has

fought back against the destructive acts and policies of the Trump Administration and the of Secretary David Bernhardt, passing legislation to protect Chaco Canyon and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from oil and gas drilling. Rep. Haaland has introduced bills including the 30 by 30 Resolution to Save Nature, the Climate Stewardship Act, and the THRIVE Agenda to deal with the climate and extinction crises and address economic, environmental, and racial injustice that parallel proposals put forward by President-elect Biden. Additionally, she helped craft the boldest climate change platform in history as a member of the DNC Platform Drafting Committee and helped mobilize stakeholders as a co-chair of the Biden Climate Engagement Advisory Council.

As you know, this would be an historic appointment. There has never been a Native member of the president's cabinet, despite the federal government's unique relationship with and trust responsibility to tribal members. It is always essential that the Department of the Interior is led by an individual with a deep and profound understanding of the federal trust responsibility and of the inviolability of treaty rights and obligations. In the last four years, we have seen the dangers of leadership by those who do not meet these qualifications – those who advocate for the dissolution of a reservation for the first time since the termination era, who side with state governments against the recognition and honoring of treaty rights, and who fail to adequately consult with and meet the needs of tribal governments during the greatest public health crisis in a century. The importance of this cabinet position to Indian Country cannot be overstated.

Rep. Haaland has been a warrior for Native peoples for decades and profoundly understands the consequences of federal administration on tribal communities. Her historic nomination and her deep respect and understanding for the fundamental principles that any Department of the Interior secretary must abide by would be an invaluable asset in this position. I have only the highest trust and regard for Rep. Haaland's integrity and her work, and there is no one more highly qualified and prepared to lead the Department of the Interior during a crisis that has disproportionately impacted and harmed Native communities. I strongly recommend her for your consideration for the secretary of the Department of the Interior.

Sincerely,



Rep. Sharice L. Davids
Member of Congress