September 6, 2023

Secretary Deb Haaland

Department of the Interior

1849 C Street, N.W.

Washington DC 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland:

We thank you for your efforts to address the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons (“MMIP”) crisis—but more needs to be done. The Missing and Murdered Unit (“MMU”) you created is important, but the MMU turns down the vast majority of the MMIP cases family members as the Unit to investigate.

Recently, the Not Invisible Act Commission held a hearing in Billings, Montana. Hundreds of people showed up, and many families testified that *no law enforcement agency*—not even the MMU—had agreed to investigate the homicide of their loved one. The crisis of MMIP will never be solved so long as the homicides of Native people go uninvestigated. But as Secretary of the Department of the Interior, you have the ability to make a difference. The question is, will you?

On August 24, 2019, Kaysera Stops Pretty Places went missing in a suburban neighborhood in Hardin, Montana, less than a half mile off the Crow Reservation. Kaysera’s body was discovered five days after she went missing, and although significant evidence exists indicating who took her life in August of 2019, her killer still walks free. He has never been charged with any crime, nor has he actually been investigated.

Days before Kaysera went missing, she filmed and posted to social media the beating of her 15-year-old brother by law enforcement at Crow Fair. The officers beating the minor in a wheelchair included Big Horn County deputies—as well as agents of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (“BIA”). The level of violence perpetrated against Native people by the BIA in Montana is off the charts. There are agents working for the MMU and BIA who are known to have raped family members of MMIP victims. This is inexcusable.

In the case of *L.B. v. United States*, a BIA officer raped a Northern Cheyenne woman who called the BIA for help. Instead of accepting responsibility, the BIA has taken the position that the BIA is not responsible for the unlawful, disgusting acts of one of its on-duty officers, and is instead forcing L.B. to continue to litigate under the Federal Torts Claims Act. This is wrong on so many levels. How are Native people supposed to trust that they can call BIA law enforcement for help if calling for help means they will be raped, and the BIA will say it cannot be held responsible for that rape? The MMIP crisis will never be addressed so long as the BIA continues to take outrageous positions such as the one it is taking in *L.B. v. United States*.

As Secretary of the Interior, you have the power and authority to change the harmful policies that prevent the MMU from investigating homicides of Native women and girls. We demand that you take any and all action necessary to ensure the MMU investigates Kaysera’s murder. You also have the power and authority to hold individual BIA officers accountable when they beat Native children and rape Native women.

We urge you to take action and help our MMIP families address the MMIP crisis.

 Sincerely,