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The Honorable Del Laverdure
Acting Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs
Bureau of Indian Affairs
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Re: Domestic Violence Emergency Shelter Funding

Dear Assistant Secretary Laverdure:

I am writing today regarding an issue of imminent concern to an emergency women's shelter in Emmonak, Alaska. Emmonak is a Yup'ik Eskimo village on the western coast of Alaska, about 500 air miles northwest of Anchorage. The village has one emergency shelter that offers domestic violence protection to families that live in the Emmonak region, including the thirteen rural villages surrounding Emmonak. It has been reported that the shelter serves about 500 women and children annually.

I am extremely concerned that due to financial difficulties and limited resources the Emmonak shelter may be forced to close its doors as early as mid-June. The shelter is currently operating under a grant awarded by the Department of Justice – Office of Violence Against Women. The shelter has applied for the same Domestic Violence and Child Victimization Enforcement grant, but does not expect to receive notification of new awards until September. The shelter's current funding will likely run out before the end of this month. The New York Times recently discussed the dire consequences that face the Emmonak shelter in a May 22nd article. I am taking the liberty of enclosing this article.

Domestic violence shelters in remote rural areas of Alaska face a number of obstacles to maintaining sustainable operations such as severe inclement weather, exorbitant energy costs, and costly relocation expenses of moving families from abusive homes into shelters. In the winter, small aircraft is the preferred and safer method of travel, but limited shelter resources often leave women and small children with no choice but to negotiate miles of wind and snow in – 50F weather by snowmachine and sled to reach the shelter from their rural villages.

There is another shelter located in Bethel, the Tundra Women's Coalition (TWC) that offers domestic violence shelter and services; however the shelter is hundreds of miles away from Emmonak. While TWC does offer its services to the Emmonak region, relying on the Bethel shelter to take on the added expense of providing services to the women and children of the thirteen villages in the Emmonak region would place a financial hardship on that shelter and force families to travel even further for protection from domestic violence.

I understand the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) may have a limited amount of unobligated funds that can be used to help tribes in emergency situations and I believe this

qualifies as an emergency. I would greatly appreciate the BIA looking into potential sources of available funding to aid this remote Alaska shelter. They need immediate assistance bridging the financial gap between the summer months and the next grant cycle. If the Emmonak shelter is forced to close its doors it could potentially leave many women and children in the Emmonak area without respite from domestic abuse and that is not a situation we should allow to happen.

Therefore, I respectfully request that the Bureau of Indian Affairs look into possible emergency financial resources for the Emmonak domestic violence shelter. I also request that the BIA reach out to the shelter to offer tribal grant writing technical assistance, or other assistance as appropriate. I appreciate your thoughtful consideration and support.

I appreciate your consideration of my requests and look forward to your prompt response. I look forward to finding a path forward that continues to strengthen our federal government's fulfillment of its trust responsibility to our nation's first peoples. Please contact my legislative assistant Kristi Williams with any questions. She can be reached at (202) 224-8767 or via email: Kristi_Williams@Murkowski.senate.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lisa Murkowski".

Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator