



September 28, 2023

Native Youth Leaders  
The Center for Native American Youth  
2300 N Street NW, Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20037-1122

**RE: Native Youth Call on Congress to be Good Relatives Amid Government Shutdown**

Dear Members of Congress,

On the cusp of another government shutdown, Native youth are calling on Congress to do what is right in finding agreement to avoid a shutdown.

Native youth have long been a guiding force behind real-time change to policies and initiatives impacting specific aspects of health, education, and the general welfare of Native children who suffer from some of the highest socioeconomic disparities in the country.

We remind Congress of the unique government-to-government relationship established between the United States and tribal nations. Congress has a moral and legal obligation to uphold not only our tribal sovereignty, but also economic prosperity. If Congress allows a government shutdown to proceed, Congress fails to uphold its trust responsibilities to Native people. Because our communities are younger, on average, than any other group in America, a government shutdown fails Native youth.

A shutdown will disproportionately impact our Native and tribal communities for months if not years to come through a butterfly effect that harms numerous social services including food access, school funding, student transportation, and health care services.

More than 30,000 of our parents and caregivers are federal workers, meaning that 30,000 of our families face the potential consequences of a government shutdown. Without income, these parents and caregivers, who have committed their careers to public service, could be left unable to provide the food and basic needs we need to survive.

A government shutdown longer than one week would threaten the services we receive in school. Free- and reduced-lunch programs, Head Start programs, and other extracurricular services would be threatened. With over 40,000 Native youth in Bureau of Education schools and over 30,000 attending federally-funded Tribal Colleges and Universities, we are very concerned that a shutdown would have long-lasting effects on our education.

As Native youth, we must be resilient for our people and our communities, however, we can only continue to lead these movements in partnership with elected officials if our elected officials do their work. Simply put, there is too much at risk and we cannot afford to be negatively impacted by this harmful impasse.

**We call on Congress to be good relatives**. Let us build a better tomorrow by ensuring that our today is funded and realized.

In anticipation,

Native Youth Leaders

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