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Date

The Honorable Brain Maienschein, Chair
Assembly Judiciary Committee
1021 O Street, Room 5640
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 273 (Ramos) Protecting Children Missing From Foster Care: SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Maienschein:

On behalf of *organization name*, I write in support of AB 273 (Ramos) which will help to address the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Persons (MMIWP) by protecting children and youth who are the most vulnerable of becoming missing. Tribal and native children who go missing or run away while in foster care are a critical factor in the disproportionately high rates of Indigenous persons reported missing or suffering violence.

Add information about your organization and connection to this issue.

California, the state with the largest population of Native Americans, faces increasing public safety challenges and the crisis of MMIWP. Indigenous Persons, especially Indigenous Women and Girls, are disproportionately affected by violence, human trafficking, and murder, and become “missing” at much higher rates than people of other racial groups. Native American children enter the child welfare system at a rate that is 2.7 times their representation in the population, the highest of any racial group (NICWA 2017).ⁱ National data shows that 85% of all missing Indigenous children over a 10-year period were endangered runaways.ⁱⁱ Nationally, American Indian, or Alaska Native children had the highest rate of victimization at 14.8 per 1,000 children in the population of the same race or ethnicity.ⁱⁱⁱ

AB 273 will protect children by creating a more family-centered and child-focused process to locate, return, and stabilize children and youth who go missing while in the care, custody, and control of the child welfare system. Current state law requires county child welfare agencies and probation departments to develop and implement specific protocols to quickly locate any child missing from foster care. However, county practices are routinely out of compliance with federal and state laws, and the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) minimum standards guidance.

AB 273 creates a more inclusive notification protocol for Tribes and families when a child goes missing from care, mandates action where there is merely guidance now, and creates a stronger oversight role for the courts. It gives the court with jurisdiction over a child a real-time opportunity to assess whether the current placement is in fact safe for the child before the

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child is returned there, and it reduces the recurrence of abuse and sexual exploitation, which our current federal and state laws were enacted to combat.

Thank you for your continued collaborative efforts with tribal communities to ensure their safety and wellbeing. For these reasons, we are pleased to support AB 273 (Ramos) and respectfully request your support for the bill.

Sincerely,

Insert signature

Name

Organization

ⁱ Woods, S. & Summers, A. (2016). Technical Assistance Bulletin: Disproportionality Rates for Children of Color in Foster Care (Fiscal Year 2014). National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges: Reno, NV.

ⁱⁱ *Native American Children Reported Missing to NCMEC*, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 2020, https://www.missingkids.org/content/dam/missingkids/pdfs/Native%20American%20Children_2009-2018.pdf.

ⁱⁱⁱ Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2021). Child Maltreatment 2019: Summary of Key Findings. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/canstats/>