**[Date]**

Re: Support for the Safeguard Tribal Objects of Patrimony (STOP) Act

Dear Senators and Representatives:

On behalf of [**tribe or tribal organization’s name**], I write to express our strong support for the Safeguard Tribal Objects of Patrimony (STOP) Act. [**Include information about tribe or tribal organization and any experience with cultural heritage issues].**

Tribes have long faced illegal trafficking in our tribal cultural heritage items, which are essential to our religious and cultural practices and identities. Many dealers know that, once they export such items abroad, the federal government and tribes have little power to secure their repatriation. Congress through the PROTECT Patrimony Resolution, H.Con.Res.122, and the Government Accountability Office in report GAO-18-537 acknowledged this problem. This issue must be addressed, as it is a matter of our cultural survival.

[**Tribe or tribal organization’s name**] supports the STOP Act’s goals of making it more difficult to export illegally trafficked items and easier for tribes to regain their cultural heritage items from abroad. We understand there already exists an international mechanism by which countries may call on each other to restrict import and facilitate the repatriation of cultural property. An international treaty that the United States signed lays the groundwork for this cooperative action, but a country must first enact certain domestic laws to utilize the treaty: an export prohibition and accompanying export certification system. Some countries, such as France, have enacted their own domestic laws that implement the treaty and restrict import of cultural property illegally exported from a country that provides export certificates. Although the United States has enacted a domestic law to aid other countries in protecting their cultural property, it has not enacted a domestic law implementing the treaty to protect tribal cultural heritage items.

We also support the STOP Act’s increased penalties for violations of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). Additionally, we support its provisions that facilitate more coordination within the federal government and between the federal government and tribes aimed at protecting and repatriating tribal cultural heritage items, including through voluntary return. And we believe the STOP Act’s Freedom of Information Act exemption will help protect sensitive information.

We note the STOP Act does not extend protections or penalties to items that are legal to sell in the United States. Instead, they extend only to contraband that could not be trafficked within the United States.

We believe the STOP Act will help end illegal trafficking in tribes’ irreplaceable cultural heritage items and bring home our sacred items that have been separated from our communities for far too long.

Sincerely,

**[Your name and title]**