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March 16, 2012

Dr. Yvette Roubideaux, Director
Indian Health Service
Department of Health and Human Services
801 Thompson Ave., Suite 440
Rockville MD 20852

Dear Dr. Roubideaux:

We respectfully request that you respond to us in writing regarding the Indian Health Service's (IHS) failure to carry out its responsibilities to fully fund the leases IHS has entered into for Village Built Clinics (VBCs) in Alaska. It has come to our attention that funding provided by the IHS through leases for the VBCs has failed to keep pace with the costs of operating and maintaining the VBCs, and that such funding has also been insufficient to maintain the VBCs in a safe condition. We understand these VBCs are critical to care of Alaska Natives within the villages and to the IHS's responsibility to develop and operate the Community Health Aide Program in Alaska, yet many VBCs are in poor condition or have had to close due to health hazards, leaving some Alaska Native communities without a clinic or ready access to health care.

In your written response, please explain why the IHS has not used available appropriations (e.g., Maintenance and Improvement funds, unrestricted/discretionary appropriations) to fully fund the VBC program. Please also explain why the IHS has not entered into direct leases with the Villages using IHS's authority under the Indian Health Care Improvement Act to ensure the leases fully cover costs such as rent, depreciation, operation and maintenance expenses, and renovation or reconstruction.

We also respectfully request that your response squarely address each of the issues raised in the October 12, 2011 letter to the Alaska Area Native Health Service Director, Christopher Mandregan, Jr., and the document attached to that letter titled "Health Facility Funding Crisis in Alaska." We understand the letter and its attached document were sent to Mr. Mandregan and copied to you on behalf of four Alaska Native health care organizations who raise serious concerns about the IHS's lack of responsibility to the VBCs.

We look forward to hearing from as soon as possible you so that we can continue to work together toward improved, quality care for Alaska Natives.

Sincerely,



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator
Alaska

Sincerely,



Mark Begich
United States Senator
Alaska

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