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State-Tribal Relations Committee

60th Montana Legislature

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April 21, 2008

The Honorable Dennis Rehberg
516 Cannon House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

Dear Rep. Rehberg:

The State-Tribal Relations Committee supports the concept of the federal government granting Social Security Title IV-E foster care funds directly to tribes for administering foster care programs. A bill by Sen. Baucus, SB1956, and HR 4688 by Rep. Earl Pomeroy of North Dakota recognize two important concerns voiced to the State-Tribal Relations Committee by members of Montana's Indian Nations at our January 2008 meeting:

- that tribes appropriately ought to receive direct funding for Foster Care Title IV-E for their members instead of operating under state-tribal agreements; and
- that residency requirements imposed under the old Assistance for Families with Dependent Children State Plans should not apply with respect to a child for whom an Indian tribe has assumed or been granted responsibility.

At the State-Tribal Relations Committee's January meeting, the Committee heard that all of Montana's tribes either had signed or were soon to sign Foster Care IV-E agreements with the State of Montana. But efficiency and sovereignty suggest that tribes would fare better with direct access to Foster Care IV-E funding and the associated responsibilities so they could use time now spent in negotiating agreements on direct program implementation.

The State-Tribal Relations Committee urges you to encourage passage of SB 1956 to implement these concepts so that children of tribal members can be reunited with their elders, extended families, and tribal traditions no matter where their parents may be, if the need arises for foster care to intervene in the parent-child relationship.

Sincerely,

Senator Frank Smith, presiding officer, State-Tribal Relations Committee
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