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## United States Senate

April 14, 2015

Cynthia Gustafson, PhD, RN Executive Officer  
Montana State Board of Nursing  
P.O. Box 200513  
Helena, Montana 59620

Dear Ms. Gustafson and Board Members,

I write in support of the Aaniiih Nakoda College's application to establish an Associate of Science in Nursing (ASN-RN) degree at their institution. This program would have an incredible impact on the college as well as raise the quality of life for the surrounding communities. It is no secret there is a shortage of nurses, and this program will help fill that void.

Despite strong interest in pursuing careers in nursing, Fort Belknap residents face significant barriers due to the reservation's extreme geographic isolation and significant costs associated with travel and/or relocation to the site of existing nursing education programs around Montana. At the same time, this geographic isolation also makes it difficult for local health care providers to recruit and retain qualified nurses, as documented by high vacancy rates at many of these facilities. By offering an ASN-RN program, Aaniiih Nakoda College will provide local training opportunities for reservation residents to pursue careers in nursing, while at the same time, developing a local workforce that can meet the staffing needs of local health care providers. By "growing their own" nurses, the college will ensure that area residents receive the highest quality care from nurses who are both technically and culturally competent to meet their unique health care needs. Their goal is simple: to educate future nurses who can provide the best possible health care for their people.

Thank you for your attention to their application. If I can provide any additional information, do not hesitate to contact me. Please inform my office of your eventual decision.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester  
United States Senator

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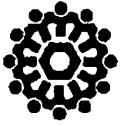
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Montana Department of  
**LABOR & INDUSTRY**

Steve Bullock, Governor  
Pam Bucy, Commissioner

**Business Standards Division**  
Todd Younkin, Division Administrator

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April 20, 2015

Dr. Carole Falcon-Chandler, President

Aaniih Nakoda College

PO Box 159

Harlem, MT 59526

Dear Dr. Falcon-Chandler,

It is with sincere pleasure I write this official letter to you to verify that the Board of Nursing on April 16, 2015 approved the Phase 1 request from Aaniih Nakoda College for a new RN nursing education program.

The Board wanted me to relay to you and the members of your team how impressed they were with the quality of the Phase I report presented by the college. They also were very pleased about the complete team effort of the community because this makes the proposal even stronger, knowing so many are backing this effort for success.

As you move on to Phase II, please feel free to consult with me regarding the requirements for this Phase using the new education rules that were also voted in at the same meeting. I look forward to working with your team as you move forward.

On behalf of the Montana Board of Nursing,

Cynthia Gustafson, PhD, RN  
Executive Director  
[cgustafson@mt.gov](mailto:cgustafson@mt.gov) (406)841-2380

**Sweet Medical Center, Inc.**  
**A Federally Qualified Health Center**  
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**March 31, 2015**

**Aaniiih Nakoda College**  
PO Box 159  
Harlem, MT 59526

**To Whom It May Concern:**

Please accept this letter as a fervent offer of support for the development of a nursing education program through Aaniiih Nakoda College. As a healthcare organization in the same frontier region as Aaniiih Nakoda College, we deeply understand the need for competent, caring, and invested healthcare providers in an area that is significantly medically underserved. I can also unconditionally attest to the importance of growing the network of healthcare professionals to meet the needs of the vulnerable and ill residents of our communities.

The mission of Aaniiih Nakoda College is symbiotic with the mission of our organization.

***"Empowering Identity and Ways of Knowing" & "Empowering People to Live Healthy Lives"***

We believe that *empowerment* is the key to improving lives whether it be through healthcare or education and the two together are a powerful combination. Because of that, the establishment of a nursing education program that is sensitive to the cultural identity of the region and promotes local growth and development of healthcare services and individuals, is a positive step that we wholly support.

We hope you receive the most serious consideration in your endeavors to this end.

Sincerely,

**Meghan Morris, RN, MBA, JD**  
**Sweet Medical Center | Chief Executive Officer**  
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# STONE CHILD COLLEGE

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March 24, 2015

Erica McKeon-Hanson  
Aaniiih Nakoda College  
P.O. 159  
Harlem, MT 59526

RE: Letter of Support for Development and Implementation of a Nursing Program

Dear Erica:

I am writing this letter to support Aaniiih Nakoda's initiative to establish a nursing program. Registered nurses make up the majority of healthcare workers. Studies of the registered nurse workforce anticipate a large increase in the demand for registered nurses by the year 2020. It is anticipated that the population growth between the years 2000 to 2020 will increase by 18%; however the increase in the number of people over the age of 65 is anticipated to grow by 54% during this same period. The growth in the number of individuals over 65 is a major contributor to the increased demand for registered nurses. Another factoid is that American Indian nurses make up less than .01% of the nursing workforce but American Indians make up about 1% of the population. This fact illustrates the underrepresentation of American Indians in the number of registered nurses. This is interesting because I see a large number of students who are interested in pursuing a career as a registered nurse.

It has been my experience that American Indians do best when they have registered nurses who are also American Indian caring for them. At the present time we see very few American Indians being successful in completing a course of study leading to a degree in nursing and subsequently passing the National Council Licensing Examination (NCLEX) to use the credential of RN. At the same time we see programs such as RAIN (Recruiting American Indian Nurses) at UND in Grand Forks graduating large numbers of American Indian nurses. The program is successful because they are able to establish a relationship with the American Indian students and provide them with the needed support for them to be successful. We do have programs at SKC and MSU Bozeman showing success in graduating American Indian nurses; however, we do not have similar programs in the eastern part of the State of Montana. I believe this type of program ensures that American Indians can and will achieve success with the right amount of support.

I want to wish you success and let you know that I am very willing to assist in any way I can with your implementation.

Sincerely,



**March 25, 2015**

**Montana State Board of Nursing  
301 South Park  
P.O. Box 200513  
Helena, Montana, 59620-0519**

**Dear Board Members,**

**This is a letter of support for Aaniliih Nakoda College to begin their nursing program. Living and working on a reservation, I have been educated on “ways of learning and engaging” for and by native students. For these students, having a school of nursing in their community will benefit them in several ways. Students will have access to faculty and college support systems that are already familiar with them and how they learn. In addition, students will also have access to resources that are culturally important to them such as prayer before exams in their traditional language and the opportunity to smudge. Students will also be closer to families for childcare and support as even a few miles may pose an issue for them.**

**We plan to work with Aaniliih Nakoda to assist them with their program and share with them information we have learned in developing our nursing program at a tribal college. We hope to also share resources with teaching as well.**

**Thank you**

**Julie Lindsay  
Nursing Program Director  
Blackfeet Community College  
PO Box 819  
Browning, MT 59417  
406-338-5441 ext 2313  
jlindsay@bfcc.edu**