**VIA MAIL**

The Honorable David Daines

Office of Senator Steve Daines

311 Hart Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510-2604

September 6, 2021

Dear Senator Daines,

I am writing because I stand in solidarity with the family of Kaysera Stops Pretty Places. I write to demand justice for Kaysera, a Crow tribal citizen. It has now been two years since Kaysera’s death, and the family still waits for justice.

On August 24, 2019, Kaysera Stops Pretty Places went missing in a suburban neighborhood in Hardin, Montana, less than a half mile off the Crow Reservation. Kaysera’s body was discovered five days after she went missing, and although significant evidence exists indicating she did not die of natural causes and was in fact killed under suspicious circumsances, her killer still walks free. He has never been charged with any crime.

Days before Kaysera went missing, she filmed and posted to social media the beating of her 15- year-old brother by law enforcement at Crow Fair. The officers beating the minor in a wheelchair included Big Horn County deputies. The U.S. Attorney’s Office investigated the incident and officers were reprimanded. There is reason to believe that one of the deputies who was under investigation for the scene filmed by Kaysera was a responding officer when her body was discovered.

This is a miscarriage of justice. Even worse, the Big Horn County Sheriff’s Office has told the family they will not investigate her murder because she died “of natural causes.” Healthy, eighteen year old girls, however, do not lay down at the corner of a busy suburban intersection, die, and then lay there unnoticed for five days (Kaysera went missing on August 24 but was not found until August 29). Kaysera’s body was discovered at the corner of Mitchell Ave. & Rangeview Dr. on August 29, by a resident of the neighborhood, when he went for his daily jog. He told law enforcement that had her body been there for five days straight, he would have noticed her before August 29. The autopsy dates her death as days before August 29, and it is clear that whoever murdered Kaysera dumped her body at this busy intersection corner sometime on August 29. This is more than enough to command an investigation.

Despite the suspicious circumstances surrounding Kaysera’s death, the FBI, the Big Horn County Sheriff’s Office, State of Montana and the Montana Department of Justice have done absolutely nothing to investigate. Kaysera’s family has provided the authorities with tips and evidence to aid the investigation, yet they continue to be ignored.

You are in a unique position to require the FBI to testify before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs and answer for their complete lack of action and investigation of Kaysera’s death. The family asks that you hold the FBI to their federal trust responsibility and duty to protect tribal citizens, including Kaysera. When a tribal citizen living on a reservation goes missing and is murdered, the FBI has a trust duty and responsibility to investigate. One of the most significant factors in the continuing MMIWG crisis is the fact that the FBI refuses to investigate the murders of Native women and girls. One reason why they refuse to investigate the murders of our women is because politicians allow them to. Right now, there is no consequence for the FBI when they refuse to do their job. We are asking you to hold them accountable. We are asking you to call for a hearing and require them to come and testify as to why they will not investigate the murders of our Native women and girls. We are writing on behalf of Kaysera. But the list of lives we have lost is in the thousands.

In this case, the FBI stated it would *not* investigate because her body was eventually found half a mile off the Crow Reservation border. Instead of abiding its federal trust duty and responsibility to protect the lives of our Native women and girls, the FBI abandoned its responsibility and claimed it had “no jurisdiction” to investigate this taking of a young girl’s life, despite the fact that the FBI knew of *no* evidence to prove her life had not been taken *on* the reservation—where the FBI would have undoubtedly had jurisdiction. To be sure, the fact that the Supreme Court and Congress have created a complex web of jurisdiction for crimes committed in Indian Country is no excuse for the FBI to sit by and doing nothing as our girls and women are murdered. The FBI can always investigate the murder of a tribal citizen on or near a reservation. If it turns out the murder occurred off tribal lands, the FBI can turn over the investigation to the property authority to prosecute.

Savanna’s Act and the Not Invisible Act are good steps toward requiring cross-agency cooperation for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (“MMIWG”) cases, but more work is left to be done. In the end, Savanna’s Act’s optional protocol will not require the FBI to do its job. Two years have passed and still, the FBI has failed to investigate. The absence of accountability is inexcusable, and a hearing must be called to demand justice for Kaysera and her family.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to watching the hearing before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs where the FBI is called to answer for its complete abdication of its treaty and trust duty to investigate the murders of the Native women and girls of our Tribal Nations.

Respectfully,

[INSERT YOUR NAME HERE]