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May 19th, 2015

Ms. Elizabeth Appel
Office of Regulatory Affairs & Collaborative Action
Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW, MS 3642
Washington, DC 20240

Re: *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking—Regulations for State Courts and Agencies in Indian Child Custody Proceedings—RIN 1076-AF25—Federal Register (March 20, 2015)*

Dear Ms. Appel,

I am the Executive Director of one of the largest tribal child welfare departments in the country. Cherokee Nation Indian Child Welfare Department (“CNICW”) consists of 125 employees, 99% of whom are Native American. As Director of this program, I witness firsthand the inconsistent application of ICWA across the country. Last year, CNICW intervened in approximately 1800 cases. Those cases included both state initiated deprived proceedings and private adoptions and guardianships and we had at least one case in every state. CNICW workers experience the entire spectrum of ICWA compliance from fully compliant and supportive courts, attorneys and agency employees to those who have “never heard of ICWA”. There is no question that the proposed regulations will ensure the consistent application and interpretation of ICWA as well as “protect the best interests of Indian children and [] promote the stability and security of Indian tribes and families,” just as Congress intended when it passed ICWA in 1978.

While we fully support the proposed regulations, we have included for your review comments that we feel will both strengthen and clarify the proposed regulations. Thank you for taking this important step to protect Cherokee children, their families and their tribes.

Sincerely,

Nikki Baker-Limore,
Executive Director, Indian Child Welfare
Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma