Template for team members on Legislation 0262-20 (emphasis on economic impacts)

[*Date*]

[*Name*]

[*Position Title]*

*[Address]*

*[Email Address]*

RE: Legislation No. 0262-20 “Supporting And Approving the Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise Reopening Plan; Supporting And Approving Full Reopening Operations Of Gaming Enterprise Facilities At A Minimum 50% Capacity; Permitting Navajo Blue Travel Plaza To Operate At Full Capacity”

Honorable Member(s) of the Navajo Nation Council/ President Jonathan Nez/ Vice President Myron Lizer:

As a member of the Navajo Nation I have seen first-hand the significant financial toll COVID-19 has taken on the Navajo Nation and its people, including the Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise (NNGE). On March 17, 2020, COVID-19 forced NNGE to close its casinos. Since that time, NNGE has remained closed to the public. According to the legislation, if NNGE does not reopen by November 17, 2020 it will be forced to make financial decisions that will have a lasting impact on NNGE’s health, its employees and the Navajo Nation. In the event NNGE is forced to close, it will be NNGE’s employees who will bear the brunt of the impact. As NNGE’s 1,180 employees (82% whom are Navajo) will permanently lose their jobs, their healthcare, and their means to support not only their immediate family, but their extended families and communities as well. In many cases these employees will need to move off the reservation to find employment in the field of casinos.

In addition to this loss of employment, closure of NNGE’s casinos will have a significant negative impact on the Navajo Nation. NNGE will no longer by able to make payments on its loans with the Navajo Nation, NTUA, and the Navajo Hopi Land Commission, including payments to the Sishasin fund and Gaming Distribution fund. Also, adversely impacted by NNGE’s closure will be sales tax payments, yearly business site lease payments, and payments for police services. Finally, NNGE’s closure would impact the Navajo businesses that supply goods and services to NNGE.

In light of these catastrophic impacts to NNGE, its employees, and the Navajo Nation’s investments, I urge the Navajo Nation Council and its standing committees support and approve NNGE’s Reopening Plan, NNGE reopening its facilities at 50% capacity and permitting the Navajo Blue Travel Plaza to operate at full capacity.

Thank you.