Template for NNGE Team Members (emphasis on NNGE health and safety protocols)

[*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:

I am writing in support of Legislation No. 0262-20. As a member of the Navajo Nation, I share great sadness in the devastation COVID-19 has brought to the Navajo people. The lives lost, the communities shattered, and the businesses that have closed is a tragedy both on the Navajo Nation and throughout the United States.

The Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise (NNGE) is not immune from the impacts of COVID-19. As on March 17, 2020, NNGE closed it casinos to the public. As a result, NNGE has earned zero dollars since its closure, 31 weeks ago. Since that time, NNGE has worked tirelessly to develop a reopening plan that protects its team members and patrons.

NNGE Management has informed me that the reopening plan NNGE will be implementing consists of “first class” health and safety measures to protect its team members and patrons. These health and safety measures include requiring all team members and guests to wear masks, disinfecting gaming machines and equipment between uses, limiting seating capacity to allow for social distancing, limiting the number of patrons at gaming tables, daily health checks of employees, installing physical barriers (such as sneeze guards and partitions), improving ventilation within the casinos, cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces, and implementing flexible sick leave policies. As team members we are all tested before returning to our duty stations and provided training on COVID -19 safety measures and implementation.

According to this legislation, in the event NNGE is unable to open on November 17, 2020, NNGE’s 1,180 employees (82% of which are enrolled members of the Navajo Nation) will be permanently laid-off. As a result, these employees and their 2,880 family members will no longer receive health care coverage. In many cases, these former NNGE employees will need to move off the reservation in order to find employment.

It is time for NNGE to be allowed to reopen at a reduced capacity and under first-in-class health and safety protocols, so that it employees can return to work and the Navajo Nation’s investment in NNGE can be preserved. As a result, I urge the Navajo Nation Council and its standing committees to 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.