

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

GREG GIANFORTE
GOVERNOR



KRISTEN JURAS
LT. GOVERNOR

June 20, 2025

The Honorable Brandon Ler
Speaker of the House
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

The Honorable Matt Regier
President of the Senate
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Speaker Ler and President Regier:

The State of Montana stands with our tribal partners in solving the challenges facing our communities, whether they are economic development, community safety, natural resource management, availability of family and health services, or setting up the next generation for success through education and workforce training. I remain committed to continue our partnership with our tribal communities to collaboratively address these issues on a government-to-government basis.

House Bill 952 aims to ensure tribal-state collaboration on the regulation of marijuana within tribal communities, but the bill is unnecessary and duplicative. While I appreciate the intentions of the bill sponsor, that authority already exists under the State-Tribal Cooperative Agreements Act. In fact, under the existing State-Tribal Cooperative Agreements Act, the State has entered into over 400 agreements with Montana's eight tribal nations addressing a broad scope of matters, including the regulation and taxation of marijuana.

I also have serious concerns about the bill's potential impact on tribal sovereignty and self-determination, as well as the government-to-government relationship between the State of Montana and tribal nations. By channeling negotiations through a new statutory process, House Bill 952 may constrain the scope and flexibility of negotiations, introduce unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles, and impose State priorities on tribal nations. House Bill 952's framework could also interfere with the ability of both parties to engage in open, meaningful, and equal negotiations as sovereigns, potentially weakening cooperation and collaboration.

Several tribes share these concerns, as expressed in the attached letter from the Fort Belknap Indian Community. As noted by Fort Belknap President Jeffery Stiffarm, the bill "creat[es] a

system in which tribes must operate within a state-imposed framework, effectively eroding [tribal] jurisdiction and self-determination.”

Therefore, in accordance with the power vested in me as Governor by the Constitution and laws of the State of Montana, I hereby veto House Bill 952: “AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE GOVERNOR TO ENTER INTO AGREEMENTS WITH TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS RELATING TO THE REGULATION OF MARIJUANA; PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE

Sincerely,



Greg Gianforte
Governor

Enclosures

cc: Legislative Services Division
Christi Jacobsen, Secretary of State

Fort Belknap Indian Community



Fort Belknap Agency
656 Agency Main Street
Harlem, Montana 59526-9455
PH: (406) 353-2205
FAX: Council - (406) 353-4541
FAX: Departments - (406) 353-2797

Fort Belknap Indian Community
(Tribal Govt.)
Fort Belknap Indian Community
(Elected to administer the affairs of the community and
to represent the Assiniboine and the Gros Ventre
Tribes of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation)

May 5, 2025

The Honorable Gov. Gianforte
Governor of the State of Montana
Helena, Montana 59620

Re: Request for Veto of HB 952 — Protection of Tribal Sovereignty and Consultation Rights

Dear Governor Gianforte:

On behalf of the Fort Belknap Indian Community — the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine Peoples — I write to respectfully urge you to veto HB 952.

Although HB 952 is presented as an opportunity for tribal-state cooperation in the regulation of cannabis, it was drafted and advanced without meaningful consultation with our government or other tribal governments in Montana. Further, its provisions undermine the sovereign rights of the Fort Belknap Indian Community and all Tribal Nations by:

- Conditioning the exercise of tribal regulatory authority on state approval,
- Mandating state control over cannabis licensing and revenue sharing, and
- Imposing frameworks that treat tribes as subordinate entities rather than equal sovereign governments.

The Fort Belknap Indian Community has the inherent sovereign right to regulate commerce, taxation, licensing, and health and safety standards within our own lands — rights recognized by the U.S. Constitution, treaties, federal statutes, and Supreme Court precedent.

HB 952 fails to respect these rights, instead creating a system in which tribes must operate within a state-imposed framework, effectively eroding our jurisdiction and self-determination.

Additionally, HB 952 was developed and passed without the free, prior, and informed consent of tribal governments, violating fundamental principles of tribal consultation that the State of Montana has previously pledged to honor.

We are not opposed to collaboration.

We believe tribal-state compacts regarding cannabis, gaming, taxation, and other issues must be negotiated on a government-to-government basis, with voluntary participation and respect for tribal sovereignty at the forefront.

HB 952 does not meet that standard.

Accordingly, we respectfully request that you veto HB 952.

Instead, we urge the State of Montana to open a meaningful dialogue with the sovereign Nations within its borders to build true partnerships that reflect mutual respect, equality, and shared goals.

We stand ready to engage in such discussions at your earliest opportunity.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jeffrey Stiffarm".

Jeffrey Stiffarm, President

