Dear President Biden,

We write to respectfully ask that you take immediate action to restore and expand the Bears Ears National Monument (“the Monument” or “Bears Ears”). Eight months have passed since you signed Executive Order 13990 directing a comprehensive review of the Trump administration’s illegal reduction of the Monument’s area and protections and three months have passed since it was reported that Secretary Haaland submitted her report to you.

Each day that passes without national monument protection for numerous sacred sites and irreplaceable cultural resources risks desecration, looting, vandalism, and misinformed visitation to an area that contains the exact kind of antiquities that inspired the creation of the Antiquities Act. These artifacts, considered by us to be messages our ancestors meant for us to see and incorporate as lessons into our present, are literally being erased. The two pictures below depict this explicitly. The first image is the “before picture” of [Redacted], taken in 2018, the second image is the “after picture” taken in 2019 following vandals smearing mud over the art.

Our patience is being further tested by the Bureau of Land Management (“BLM”) and United States Forest Service (“USFS”), joint managers of the reduced monument, which have both continued with an array of planning activities, while indicating an inability to work directly with the Coalition on management issues and planning activities until executive action is taken by you. In short, without executive action by you, both the BLM and USFS will continue operating under the terms of their 2020 Monument Management Plans, which plans are based on President Trump’s illegally downsized Bears Ears’ boundaries. These planning activities, which include new water wells to expand opportunities for cattle grazing and an increase in permitting for motorized recreation and
hardening and expansion of campgrounds, have been undertaken without us being collaboratively engaged and we do not want them to become effectively a fait accompli.

Further, over the past several months’ new hard rock mining claims continue to be located and developed within the original boundaries of BENM. These mining claims, as well as others located since February 2018, pose a serious and immediate threat to sacred sites, cultural resources, and other monument objects.

We have tried to be patient and respectful as we await your decision on restoration. However, the longer action is not taken, real harm, much permanent, is occurring on this sacred landscape. Further, until you act, we cannot effectively work with federal agencies on the tribal land management plan we have been working on for the last three and a half years.

For all of the above reasons, we respectfully request that you take immediate action to restore the protections of the sacred cultural landscape we call Bears Ears.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Clark W. Tenakhongva
Vice Chairman of the Hopi Tribe
Coalition Co-Chair

Henry Stevens, Jr.
Representative for the Navajo Nation
Coalition Co-Chair