September 10, 2023

Governor Greg Gianforte

P.O. Box 200801

Helena, MT 59620-0801

Governor Gianforte:

I write to respectfully request that use your leadership and your voice to ensure that the homicide of Kaysera Stops Pretty Places is finally investigated. Kaysera is a Crow tribal citizen and a Montana citizen. It has now been four years since Kaysera’s death, and the family still waits for justice.

On August 24, 2019, Kaysera went missing in a suburban neighborhood in Hardin, Montana, less than a half mile off the Crow Reservation. Kaysera’s body was discovered five days after she went missing, and although significant evidence exists indicating who took her life in August of 2019, her killer still walks free. He has never been charged with any crime, nor has he or any of the other suspects ever been investigated.

Law enforcement did not inform the family that Kaysera’s body had been found until almost two weeks later on September 11. And when they did inform the family, the Big Horn County Sheriff’s Office made no attempt or effort to interview a single person in Kaysera’s family. Instead of interviewing the individuals who constitute the most obvious sources of critical information in a criminal investigation, the investigating officers at the Big Horn County Sheriff’s Office refused to meet with Kaysera’s mother, aunties, and grandmother/legal guardian, who had to call and show up in person, repeatedly, for weeks before anyone at the Sheriff’s Office would even speak with them.

This is a miscarriage of justice. Even worse, the Big Horn County Sheriff’s Office has told the family they will not investigate her murder because she died “of natural causes.” Healthy, eighteen year old girls, however, do not lay down at the corner of a busy suburban intersection, die, and then lay there unnoticed for five days (Kaysera went missing on August 24 but was not found until August 29). Kaysera’s body was discovered at the corner of Mitchell Ave. & Rangeview Dr. on August 29, by a resident of the neighborhood, when he went for his daily jog. He told law enforcement that had her body been there for five days straight, he would have noticed her before August 29. The autopsy dates her death as days before August 29 (and based on the food contents in her stomach, most likely the early morning of the 25), and it is clear that whoever murdered Kaysera dumped her body at this busy intersection corner on August 29. This is more than enough to command an investigation.

Despite the suspicious circumstances surrounding Kaysera’s death, the FBI, the Big Horn County Sheriff’s Office, and the Montana Department of Justice have done absolutely nothing to investigate. Kaysera’s family has provided the authorities with tips and evidence to aid the investigation, yet they continue to be ignored.

As the Governor of Montana, you are in a unique position to ensure Native girls like Kaysera receive justice and are not ignored and forgotten by the very organizations put in place to protect them. Montana is the current epicenter for Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls. On May 5, 2022, you signed a proclamation declaring that “Montana must bring all resources to bear to track data, raise awareness, and strengthen interagency collaboration to protect Montana’s indigenous persons.”

I call on you, as Governor of Montana, to instruct the law enforcement agencies of your State to bring all resources to bear to investigate the murder of Kaysera. It is your job to ensure justice for our women and girls. Four years is far too long for any family to wait for justice. If your administration does not take action and investigate her homicide, your administration will only be perpetuating the crisis of Murdered and Missing in Montana.

 Sincerely,