



February 12, 2024

Honorable Chuck Schumer, Majority Leader

Honorable Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader

Honorable Jeanne Shaheen, Chair
Committee on Small Business and
Entrepreneurship

Honorable Jodi Ernst, Ranking Member
Committee on Small Business and
Entrepreneurship

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Support for Authorizing the Small Business Administration Office of Native American Affairs (S. 1156)

Dear Senators:

The 18 undersigned organizations – representing the interests of Indian Tribes, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian governing organizations, their business enterprises, and business owned by their community members throughout the United States – write in strong support of the bipartisan Native American Entrepreneurial Opportunity Act (S. 1156) introduced by Senators John Hickenlooper (D-CO) and Cynthia Lummis (R-WY), and reported to the Senate on July 25, 2023. The bill formally authorizes and elevates the Office of Native American Affairs (ONAA) of the Small Business Administration (SBA), directed by an Associate Administrator reporting directly to the SBA Administrator. Similar legislation (H.R. 7102) was just approved unanimously by the House Committee on Small Business. Urgent need for Native small business relief and support calls for a fortified ONAA to coordinate with all SBA components and deploy assistance from all SBA programs to catalyze the growth, success, and self-sufficiency of Native communities' businesses and economic development. **We urge the Senate to delay no longer and promptly take up and approve S. 1156.**

This bill properly affords the ONAA the stature and authority it has long needed to work effectively on Indian Country's behalf and coordinate with other offices within SBA and key Cabinet-level Departments to direct federal resources in more targeted ways to Indian Tribes, Alaska Native corporations, Alaskan and Native Hawaiian communities, and Native small businesses across the country. Charged to direct SBA's Native American Outreach activities, the ONAA would formulate and promote policies, programs, and assistance that better address the entrepreneurial, capital access, business development, and contracting needs of Tribes and Native businesses. The ONAA also could provide financial and other assistance directly to: (1) deploy training, counseling, and other educational outreach, workshops, and supplier events; (2) facilitate Native contractors' participation in the SBA's various small business contracting programs; (3) facilitate and improve access to SBA's various loan programs, loan guarantees, disaster assistance, and other capital access programs; and (4) ensure that Tribal Consultations are conducted to solicit input and facilitate discussion of potential modifications to SBA programs and procedures.

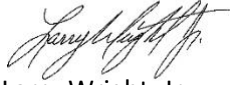
Congress must act quickly on this important new legislation to elevate and enhance SBA's ONAA, just as Congress has authorized other such high-level Offices within the Departments of the Interior, Commerce, Energy, Agriculture, Justice, Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development. Elevating and empowering the SBA ONAA will ensure that intended assistance will be effectively delivered to Indian Country's businesses and entrepreneurs in the years to come.

We thank you and look forward to working with you to advance this legislation to enactment this Congress.

Respectfully,



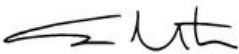
Chris James
President & CEO
National Center for American
Indian Enterprise Development



Larry Wright, Jr.
Executive Director
National Congress of American
Indians



Quinton Carroll
Executive Director
Native American Contractors
Association



Susan Masten
Interim Executive Director
Native American Finance Officers
Association



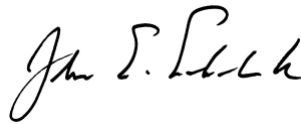
Pete Upton
Chief Executive Officer
Native CDFI Network



Amber Schulz-Oliver
Executive Director
Affiliated Tribes of Northwest
Indians



Jason Giles
Executive Director
Indian Gaming Association



John Echohawk
Executive Director
Native American Rights Fund



A. Gay Kingman
Executive Director
Great Plains Tribal Chairmen's
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Sherry L. Rupert
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American Indian and Alaska Native
Tourism Association



Sarah Echohawk
Chief Executive Officer
American Indian Science and
Engineering Society (AISES)



Kirk Francis
President
United South and Eastern Tribes
Sovereignty Protection Fund



Lori Pourier
President
First Peoples Fund



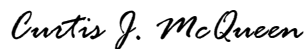
Kim Reitmeier
President
ANCSA Regional Association



Cariann Ah Loo
Board President
Native Hawaiian Organizations
Association



Cole W. Miller
Kari Jo Lawrence
Co-Chairs
Native Farm Bill Coalition



Curtis J. McQueen
Executive Director
Alaska Native Village Corporation
Association



Kari Jo Lawrence
Chief Executive Officer
Intertribal Agriculture Council