



June 9, 2021

Honorable Charles E. Schumer, Majority Leader

Honorable Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader

Honorable Benjamin L. Cardin, Chairman  
Senate Committee on Small Business  
and Entrepreneurship  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Honorable Rand Paul, Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Small Business  
and Entrepreneurship  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

**Re: Support for Legislation Authorizing the SBA Office of Native American Affairs**

Dear Senators:

The undersigned organizations – representing the interests of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments and business enterprises throughout the United States – write in strong support of the new bipartisan bill, S. 1735, the ONAA Enhancement Act of 2021, just introduced by Senator John Hickenlooper (D-CO) with cosponsors Senators Cynthia Lummis (R-WY), Mazie Hirono (D-HI) and James Inhofe (R-OK). 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. Urgent need for native small business relief calls for a fortified ONAA to coordinate with all SBA components and deploy assistance from the new Community Navigator Pilot and other SBA programs to mitigate the disastrous consequences of COVID on Indian tribes, Alaska Native corporations, tribal and other native small businesses and entrepreneurs in Indian Country. **We urge prompt approval of S. 1735 alone or included in other important legislation moving toward enactment.**

This bill properly affords the ONAA the stature and budget 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, supplier events, and otherwise access the SBA’s entrepreneurial assistance; 2) facilitate native contractors’ participation in the SBA 8(a) Business Development, HUB Zone, women business, veteran and service disabled veteran business, and other 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) assist with, or conduct, Tribal Consultations 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 high-level Offices of Native American Affairs or Tribal Relations (e.g., at Interior, Commerce, Housing, Energy, Agriculture, Justice, Federal Communications Commission). Elevating and empowering the SBA ONAA will ensure that intended COVID-19 relief and other assistance will be effectively delivered to Indian Country's businesses and entrepreneurs.

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

Respectfully,

Chris James  
President & CEO  
National Center for American  
Enterprise Development

Fawn Sharp  
President  
National Congress of Native  
American Indians

Joseph Valandra  
Executive Director  
American Contractors  
Association

Cristina Danforth  
Board President  
Native American Finance  
Officers Association

Sarah Echohawk  
Chief Executive Officer  
American Indian Science &  
Engineering Society

Sherry L. Rupert  
Chief Executive Officer  
American Indian Alaska  
Native Tourism Association

Jason Giles  
Executive Director  
National Indian Gaming  
Association

Jackson Brossy  
Executive Director  
Native CDFI Network

Chief Kirk Francis  
President  
United South and Eastern Tribes  
Sovereignty Protection Fund

John Echohawk  
Executive Director  
Native American Rights Fund

Cariann Ah Loo  
Board Treasurer  
Native Hawaiian  
Organizations Association

Amber Schulz-Oliver  
Executive Director  
Affiliated Tribes of Northwest  
Indians Economic Developmen  
Corporations