



April 3, 2023

Honorable Gina Raimondo, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20230

**Re: Fully Fund the Office of Native American Business Development**

Dear Secretary Raimondo:

The undersigned organizations – representing the interests of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments and business enterprises throughout the United States – write to commend the selection of Shaun Deschene as Director of the Office of Native American Business Development (ONABD). Most important, we urge you to make available immediately the authorized annual funding of \$2 Million for full operation and staffing of this Office. Congress passed not just one, but two, Public Laws 106-464 and 116-261 specifically to re-establish the ONABD to report directly to the Secretary and perform duties prescribed for the Secretary to: deliver tailored, targeted business-related relief to Indian Country; promote departmental efforts and coordinate with other agencies supporting business and economic development recovery, and promote trade and tourism.

These two laws codified a similar office established in the Office of the Commerce Secretary during the Clinton Administration, using funds drawn from several offices within the Department. Likewise, FY 2023 Departmental Management funds should be used to provide full funding for the ONABD Director and some staff to expand operations. And, since the Department’s FY 2024 Budget Request documents made no apparent request for ONABD funding, we ask that you provide more detail about the Department’s plans to support this Office going forward. The goal should be fulfilling Congressional intent to see the Secretary, through the ONABD, promote entrepreneurship and business development, expand federal contract opportunities, create jobs, support economic development and broadband deployment, promote fisheries and expand trade and tourism for tribal economies – all essential for Indian Country to recover and thrive.

We thank you for your prompt attention and await your response on behalf of Indian Country.

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

Jason Giles  
Executive Director  
Indian Gaming Association

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



AMERICAN INDIAN SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING SOCIETY

**AIANTA**  
American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association

*Lillian Sparks Robinson*

Lillian Sparks Robinson  
Interim Executive Director  
Native American Contractors Association

*Sherry L. Rupert*

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

*Sarah Echohawk*

Sarah Echohawk  
Chief Executive Officer  
American Indian Science & Engineering Society

*Rico Frias*

Rico Frias  
Executive Director  
Native American Finance Officers Association

*Chief Kirk Francis*

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

*Pete Upton*

Pete Upton  
Chief Executive Officer  
Native CDFI Network

*John E. Echohawk*

John Echohawk  
Executive Director  
Native American Rights Fund

*Leonard Forsman*

Leonard Forsman  
President  
Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians

*Stacey McQuade-Eger*

Stacey McQuade-Eger  
Executive Director  
Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians Economic Development Corporation