



February 5, 2024

Honorable Mike Johnson, Speaker

Honorable Hakeem Jeffries, Minority Leader

Honorable Roger Williams, Chair
Committee on Small Business

Honorable Nydia Velázquez, Ranking Member
Committee on Small Business

Honorable Tom Cole, Chair
Committee on Rules

Honorable Jim McGovern, Ranking Member
Committee on Rules

House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support for Authorizing the Small Business Administration Office of Native American Affairs (H.R. 7102)

Dear Speaker, Minority Leader, Committee Chairs and Ranking Members:

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 (H.R. 7102) introduced by Representatives Sharice Davids (D-KS) and Eli Crane (R-AZ) and received unanimous committee approval last week. The bill formally authorizes and elevates the Office of Native American Affairs (ONAA) of the Small Business Administration (SBA), directed by an Assistant Administrator reporting directly to the SBA Administrator. Similar legislation (S. 1156) awaits Senate passage. 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 prompt full House approval of this important measure.**

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 the conducting of 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 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,



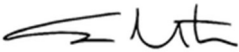
Chris James
President & CEO
National Center for American
Indian Enterprise Development



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



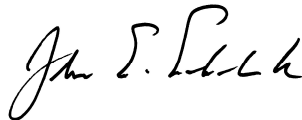
Pete Upton
Chief Executive Officer
Native CDFI Network



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
Association



Sherry L. Rupert
Chief Executive Officer
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
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Cole W. Miller
Kari Jo Lawrence
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Native Farm Bill Coalition



Curtis J. McQueen
Executive Director
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Association



Kari Jo Lawrence
Chief Executive Officer
Intertribal Agriculture Council