

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 15, 2021

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary of the Interior
Department of Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland:

We are writing to request the Department of Interior complete its review and issue proposed findings on the Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians' petition for acknowledgement as a federally recognized tribe.

Federal recognition provides Native tribes with a government-to-government relationship with the United States and the right to obtain services and benefits that accompany trust protection. The Grand River Band began the petition process in 1994, and their petition has been under active consideration since 2013, a process that the Bureau of Indian Affairs reportedly estimated would take approximately 18 months. In April, 2020, consideration was suspended due to the COVID-19 crisis and has yet to be resumed.

The COVID-19 crisis has undoubtedly placed a significant strain on Departmental resources, but it is also true that the Native American communities have been disproportionately affected by the global pandemic's impact on public health and the economy. The Department of Interior's lack of urgency in issuing a determination on federal recognition potentially hinders Grand River Bands' ability to access vital resources such as health services for tribal members and federal grants to promote self-sufficiency. The members and leadership of the Grand River Band deserve a fair and timely determination on federal recognition.

Therefore, we urge your Department to expedite its review of Grand River Bands petition and issue proposed findings in a timely manner. Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator