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BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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The Honorable Debra Haaland
Secretary of the Interior
United States Department of the Interior
Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C., 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland,

I am writing to express my support for the Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians' petition for federal recognition and to urge the U.S. Department of the Interior to approve the tribe's request without delay.

Approval of the Grand River Bands' petition is long overdue, as the tribe has been on the "active consideration list" with the Department since 2013. The tribe was in the final phase of becoming federally recognized when the process was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Federal recognition would allow the Grand River Bands to access resources that are only afforded to federally recognized tribes, such as tuition, health care and housing assistance. For far too long, Grand River Bands members have been unjustly and unfairly deprived of these key resources due to the tribe's lack of recognition.

The Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians is a valuable part of the community, with deep roots and an amazing history in West Michigan. Its tribal members live and work in West Michigan, and the Grand River Bands is heavily involved in West Michigan communities, from working to restore the rapids in the Grand River in Grand Rapids, to playing a central role in community events that bring people together.

The tribe has support from lawmakers from both parties and the public. I urge you to approve the Grand River Bands' petition for federal recognition as soon as possible. Approval will allow tribal members access to the resources they deserve.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stan Stek".

Stan Stek
Kent County Board Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Wooden".

Stephen Wooden
Kent County Board Minority Vice-Chair