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September 20, 2022

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 you on behalf of the West Grand Neighborhood Organization to express our 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. Our organization has served the community since 1973. Our mission is to amplify neighborhood voices. Our neighbors ancestors were here well before 1855 when the treaty was originally signed. Many of the tribe are actively involved in leaving the space better than they found it, just as our organization is.

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.

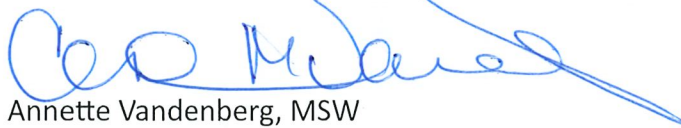
Federal recognition would allow the Grand River Bands to access resources that are only afforded to federally recognized tribes, such as tuition, health care and housing assistance. For far too long, Grand River Bands members have been unjustly and unfairly deprived of these key resources due to the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

Sincerely,



Annette Vandenberg, MSW
Executive Director