

August 12, 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 would like to express my support for the Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians' petition for federal recognition.

The Grand River Bands' petition has been on the "active consideration list" with the Department since 2013, and deserves to be recognized. The COVID-19 pandemic has delayed this process significantly and now is the time to act.

If the petition were to be approved, it 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. 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.

Lacey Vaccaro

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