



December 15, 2025

Senator Gary Peters
Hart Senate Office Building Ste. 724
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Elissa Slotkin
291 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Thank you for introducing S. 2160, ***The Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indian Restoration Act of 2025***, which would reaffirm federal recognition for the Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians. As you know, Congresswoman Scholten and Congressman James introduced a companion bill in the House, HR 3255, with bi-partisan colleagues from the Michigan congressional delegation.

Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. supports the Grand River Bands effort to secure federal recognition. Officials have long reviewed and considered the Grand River Bands' petition and it is encouraging to see leadership advancing a legislative solution.

The Grand River Bands have a long, well-documented history in Michigan. The chiefs signed five separate treaties to reaffirm the Tribe's sovereignty and homelands. Despite this, they remain the last treaty tribe east of the Mississippi without federal recognition. In 1994, Congress passed legislation recognizing two other Michigan Ottawa tribes with histories nearly identical to that of the Grand River Bands. Grand River Bands' history also is very similar to any other of the 14 tribes in Michigan already federally recognized.

The Tribe in 1994 filed its petition for federal recognition with the Bureau of Indian Affairs Office of Federal Acknowledgment and completed it in 2000. More than two decades later, the Tribe received a Proposed Finding in February 2023, addressing only one of the seven mandatory criteria. The federal acknowledgement process simply remains too slow and will apparently take many more years to complete.

Meanwhile, the Grand River Bands are a valuable part of our community, with members who live, work and volunteer in West Michigan.

Federal recognition will allow the Grand River Bands to access resources only afforded to federally recognized tribes- including funding for health care, housing and education. Federal recognition will give the Grand River Bands a formal voice in policy matters that impacts tribes. And federal recognition would also allow the Grand River Bands to pursue economic development opportunities that could benefit all residents of West Michigan – and our entire state.

The tribe now has clear bipartisan support from lawmakers and enthusiastic support from the public. We appreciate your leadership and look forward to successful passage of ***The Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians Restoration Act of 2025***.

Sincerely,

Tim Kelly
President/CEO