



August 14, 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

Dear Senators Peters and Slotkin:

Thank you for introducing S. 2160, *The Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians 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, along with bipartisan colleagues from the Michigan congressional delegation, have introduced a companion bill in the House (HR 3255).

The Grand River Bands has a long and well-documented history in Michigan. Between 1795 and 1855, its chiefs signed five treaties reaffirming the Tribe's Constitutional sovereignty and the homelands of its people. Yet today, it remains the last treaty tribe east of the Mississippi River without federal recognition – a change that can only be made through legislation.

In 1994, Congress recognized two other Michigan Ottawa tribes – the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians and the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians – whose histories closely mirror that of the Grand River Bands. The Tribe filed its petition for federal recognition in 2000, but more than two decades later, the slow federal process has left acknowledgment still years away. In the meantime, generations have gone without resources afforded to federally recognized tribes, including funding for social services, education, housing, elder care, exercising treaty rights, and having a voice in legislation that affects tribes.

Federal recognition would also allow the Grand River Bands to pursue economic development opportunities that could bring hundreds of good-paying jobs to West Michigan and benefit the entire state. That is why we support S. 2160, *The Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians Restoration Act of 2025*.

Sincerely,

Ben Greene
Chair, Kent County Board of Commissioners

Al Vanderberg
Kent County Administrator/Controller