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Emboldened by faith, serving with joy

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

Dear Senator Slotkin,

On behalf of the Dominican Sisters of Grand Rapids, thank you for introducing S. 2160, the Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians Restoration Act of 2025. We are grateful for your leadership in advancing legislation that would restore federal recognition to the Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians and help correct a longstanding injustice.

As Dominican Sisters, our faith and Catholic Social Teaching call us to uphold the dignity of every person, to stand with communities that have been marginalized, and ensure that every community is seen, heard, and treated with dignity. The federal government's failure to recognize the Grand River Bands has too often rendered the Tribe invisible in public life despite its enduring history and identity. Restoring federal recognition is an important first step toward honoring the Tribe's sovereignty and ensuring it can fully participate in the life of our nation and our broader community.

Between 1795 and 1855, the Grand River Bands entered into multiple treaties with the United States, yet today they remain the last treaty tribe east of the Mississippi River without federal recognition. For generations, tribal members have endured a slow and burdensome federal acknowledgment process that has delayed justice and denied them access to the resources and recognition they deserve. A commitment to truth and justice calls us to address these historical wounds and move toward reconciliation.

Federal recognition is more than a legal designation. It would strengthen the Tribe's ability to care for their people through access to critical resources (housing, health, education, elder services), protect its culture and treaty rights, and expand opportunities for its future. Supporting the Grand River Bands reflects our shared responsibility to promote the common good and uphold the dignity of Indigenous communities.

For too long, the Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians have waited for the federal government to acknowledge what history has already made clear. We respectfully urge Congress to pass S. 2160 and restore federal recognition to the Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians.

Thank you again for your leadership and for your commitment to justice for the Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians.