

Date

The Honorable Toni Atkins
Senate President Pro Tempore
1021 O Street, Suite 8518
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Nancy Skinner
Chair, Senate Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review
1021 O Street, Suite 8630
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Tribal Housing Grant Program

Dear Pro Tem Atkins and Senator Skinner:

[Name of Your Organization] supports the creation of a new California Tribal Housing Grant Program and the associated budget request of \$109 million to capitalize it. With the passage of AB1010 in 2019, State housing programs, for the first time, adopted language to explicitly include tribes as eligible applicants. However, as tribes have attempted to access these programs, it has become clear they were not designed with tribes in mind. These programs typically conflict with tribal laws and sovereignty and impose financial and legal conditions that cannot be met by most tribes. Tribes are forced to learn the intricacies and cumbersome application processes of multiple State housing programs, while having to deploy limited staff and resources with scant prospects of being funded. Tribal set-asides in existing programs allow for only a small number of tribal projects and programs each year. In contrast, county and city units of government and affordable housing development organizations typically have many more years of experience and resources working through these programs.

According to a 2019 study of California Tribal Housing Needs and Opportunities, tribal communities have rates of poverty, overcrowding, substandard housing, and homelessness that are much higher than other Californians. Until recently, tribes have been ineligible for, or have not been able to fairly compete in, nearly all State housing program. Since 2014, 12 tribes have been awarded State funds to build 335 units. There are 109 federally-recognized tribes in California.

As a result, we seek \$109 million for a new California Tribal Housing Grant Program (THGP) designed specifically for and by tribes. THGP will provide a pathway for tribes to rebuild their communities, which have been systematically displaced and disenfranchised since California became a state. Tribes will now be able to build new housing for rent or ownership, while also addressing their community's infrastructure needs, such as plumbing and electrical power. Funds may be used to assist tribal members to buy a new home or repair or replace substandard homes. Assistance will be provided in the form of a grant or low-interest, forgivable loan, much like the California's Farmworker Housing Grant Program. Program rules HCD and CIAP, along with the Tribal Equity Advisory Committee, will be authorized to develop program rules.

To ensure the new THGP is truly culturally appropriate, a Tribal Equity Advisory Committee should be created to help build the program around tribal housing practices together with California tribes and the California Department of Housing and Community Development.

Embracing ideas and advancing opportunities that will address tribal housing needs recognizes the historic injustices perpetrated against California's first nations and will help rectify past wrongs. This program is one of many steps needed to uplift tribes and reconstitute self-sustaining and thriving tribal communities in California.

We look forward to working with Legislative Leadership and the Budget Committees in both houses, as well as with the Administration, to include this pilot program in the FY 2022/23 State budget with an initial appropriation of \$109 million. We greatly appreciate your leadership and partnership and look forward to working together to fulfill the State's commitments to restorative justice for California's tribal communities.

Sincerely,

Your name and title

CC: Christina Snider, Governor's Office Tribal Liaison.