



# Native American Youth and Family Center

5135 NE Columbia Blvd, Portland, OR 97218 | p 503.288.8177 | f 503.288.1260 | nayapdx.org

June 14, 2019

## **Chair Nathanson, Chair Hass, Co-Chairs, and members of the Joint Committee on Tax Expenditures:**

My name is Oscar Arana, I am the Director of Community Development at the Native American Youth and Family Center, also known as NAYA. Thank you for the opportunity to write about the need to incorporate the Oregon IDA Initiative HB 2164.

NAYA's wraparound programs directly serve over 2,000 individual youths, adults, and Elders, and positively impact more than 10,000 individuals living in Portland's growing Native American community each year. With a 10-acre campus in Portland's Cully neighborhood, NAYA is the city's Native American gathering center for clients to practice tradition, teach culture, and access a continuum of educational, asset-building, and self-sufficiency programs in a safe and inviting space. Over the last four-plus decades, NAYA has evolved from a volunteer-led organization to a community center that employs more than 130 staff members and with an annual operational budget of more than \$10 million.

One of our critical asset-building programs is our Individual Development Account Program (IDA). IDAs are a matched savings program that encourages low-income Oregonians to consistently save and focus on acquiring an asset by typically matching their savings 3-to-1. The program instills life-long saving habits and skills that were often not taught to our clients.

IDAs are available throughout Oregon, via a network of more than 80 organizations. At NAYA, we intentionally pair IDAs with other programs and services we provide – such as our College and Career Center, our Homeownership Program, and our Business Development Program.

NAYA's 273 IDA clients have saved approximately \$1 million through this program. This is no easy accomplishment considering the average Native American household median income in Portland is less than \$30,000, and our community has been significantly left out of the economic upswing our state is experiencing.

Almost half of our IDA savers have been post-secondary education savers. These are clients like:

*Juanita Tapio-Brewer who is getting ready to graduate with her Masters in Social Work from Portland State University next week. She is a graduate of NAYA's alternative high school, lives in one of our affordable housing projects, and was a regular at our College and Career Center.*

*It's students like Davineekaht Whilte Elk who grew up participating in our youth programming, attending our summer programs, playing on our volley teams, and now works at NAYA supporting our youth programs while she finishes college.*

Youth Centered • Family Driven • Elder Guided

About 27% of our IDA savers have either purchased or are on their way to purchasing a home. These are clients like:

*Angelique Spotted Eagle who came to NAYA to our access our early childhood program and saw an IDA flier. She accessed our homeownership program and through our partnership with Proud Ground now owns a home in SE Portland.*

Just under 25% of our clients are saving towards a business asset. Clients like:

*Tanya Golden, owner of Golden Saffron, who has been an active participant in our microenterprise program. She has worked diligently to establish her credit, which allowed her to secure small loans and even a USDA grant.*

*Or Deanna Wolgemuth, owner of Rock on Jewelry, who later switched her business to Tin Cantina, turning her underutilized airstream trailer into a mobile bartending service.*

Our community does not have the financial flexibility, resources, or assets that allows us to take risks without the potential to experience dire consequences. The IDA program gives our clients the opportunity to learn, build assets, and even more important the confidence – both personally and financially – to dream bigger and take risks they wouldn't have otherwise.

Please support low-income Oregonians and support our Native American clients by taking the necessary action in this session to keep IDAs viable. We are asking that you incorporate the provisions of SB 790 into the tax credit omnibus

First, and very important, we need to change the value of the tax credit to donors. We are asking for values up to 100% to be included in statute. Without this change, which could be done with no revenue impact, the viability of the entire Initiative is threatened.

Second, we are requesting an increase in the tax credit authority above \$7.5 million. Our popular IDA program would have more than 273 clients, but the initiative has been flat funded since 2012. We cannot meet the community's demand for this program unless the initiative grows. An increase of \$3.3 million a year would keep us flat funded, and an increase of \$7.5 million a year would allow the initiative to grow.

Finally, we need to make other statutory changes to eliminate references to old programs and make the program more impactful, including allowing clients to access assets faster.

The IDA program is one of the few tools that enhance the financial resilience of our clients and builds our community's assets and wealth. We ask your support this session to keep IDAs available. Thank you for your hard work this session, and the service you provide to our state.

Sincerely,



Oscar Arana  
Director of Community Development  
503.288.8177