



Native American Youth and Family Center

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April 6, 2021

To: Chair Lively, Vice Chair Cate, Vice Chair Kropf, Members of the House Committee on Economic Recovery and Prosperity

RE: House Bill 2266 – Support

Chair Lively, Vice Chair Cate, Vice Chair Kropf, Members of the Committee. For the record, my name is William Miller, I am Blackfeet and Cherokee and I represent the Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA) located in Portland, Oregon. Founded by the community, for the community, the NAYA Family Center is a family of numerous tribes and voices who are rooted in sustaining tradition and building cultural wealth. We provide culturally specific programs and services that guide our people in the direction of personal success and balance through cultural empowerment. Our continuum of lifetime services creates a wraparound, holistic healthy environment that is Youth Centered, Family Driven, and Elder Guided. I am writing today in support of House Bill 2266.

NAYA works to develop and foster small business growth and development. In our coaching and technical assistance for Native American entrepreneurs, access to capital repeatedly is the barrier which prevents the Native community from leveraging microenterprise as a tool for upward mobility and economic prosperity. Business owners who are ready to scale and who are employing residents in their community are consistently rejected by financing institutions who are not willing to accept the risk without property as collateral.

The notion that collateral is required to access financing for business is a problem in our community. According to the 2019 Poverty in Multnomah County Report and 2019 Multnomah County Point-in-time Counts:

- 30% of Multnomah County's Native American population lives in poverty – over twice the rate for White residents
- Native American unemployment rate is 11%, almost three times that of Whites
- Native Americans are over 400% more likely to be homeless than White folks; the greatest disparity among all communities of color



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With incomes in the Native community so low, many folks turn to selling handmade goods to supplement their livelihood, but despite a thriving economy of handmade Native artwork, these entrepreneurs often cannot qualify for even a micro-loan to scale and increase revenue. With the lack of public investment in Native American enterprise (neither Business Oregon nor Multnomah County target funds for this work) Native voices are speaking up and asking legislators to support HB 2266, which should provide security for finance institutions through a collective loan reserve, emboldening CDFI's and other lenders to invest in at-risk Native entrepreneurs who are poised to leverage those funds into a prosperous future.

On behalf of the Native American Youth and Family Center we urge the passage of HB 4033.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William Miller".

William Miller
Government Affairs Manager