

United Tribes of Michigan

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Frank Ettawageshik, Executive Director

March 18, 2024

SENT VIA E-MAIL CRHEINGANS@HOUSE.MI.GOV

Rep. Carrie Rheingans
47th District
State Capitol
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 49333

Subject: United Tribes of Michigan Support for House Bill 5600 –
Establishing the Office of Tribal Legislative Liaison

Honorable Carrie Rheingans:

On behalf of the United Tribes of Michigan (UTM), we deeply appreciate your sponsorship of House Bill 5600, which establishes the Office of Tribal Legislative Liaison. UTM also expresses its sincerest appreciation for the increased attention and sensitivity exhibited toward important Native American issues and the Legislature's willingness to listen and act on them.

The Office of Tribal Legislative Liaison would equip Michigan Tribes with the ability to comprehensively voice their formal positions through consultation with the legislative branch concerning legislation affecting Michigan Tribes. Governor Gretchen Whitmer's Executive Directive 2019-17 reaffirms and extends Michigan's commitment to recognize Michigan's federally recognized Indian Tribes' sovereignty and right of self-governance and orders each state department and agency to adhere to these principles. However, the Michigan legislature has no such requisite consultation requirement for the legislative branch. The establishment of the Office of Tribal Legislative Liaison would facilitate meaningful legislative consultation like Governor Whitmer's Executive Directive does for the executive branch.

UTM generally supports matters that impact all 12 tribal communities; however, each sovereign nation may have priorities that may not be universally shared collectively. Lately, we have learned of individuals and organizations that lack any formal tribal affiliation, yet their uninformed policy positions attach to tribes. These individuals and organizations may express contrary or unsupported tribal positions.

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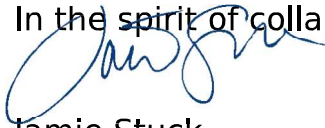
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Indeed, they often advance standpoints without consulting any of the tribes or tribal leaders they purport to represent.

A Tribal Legislative Liaison would eliminate this confusion and ensure that tribal perspectives are voiced and vetted by tribal leaders who are elected to make informed decisions on behalf of the citizens they represent.

Migwéch for sponsoring House Bill 5600. We look forward to working with you through the legislative process.

In the spirit of collaboration,



Jamie Stuck

cc: UTM

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