



February 26, 2026

The Honorable Cathy Giessel
Majority Leader
Alaska State Senate
State Capitol Room 121
Juneau, AK, 99801
Senator.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov

RE: Alaska Federation of Natives Support for SJR26

Dear Senator Giessel:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Alaska Federation of Natives (“AFN”), the largest statewide Alaska Native organization, to express our appreciation and support for SJR26, “Supporting the ability of Alaska Native Corporations to participate in the United States Small Business Administration’s 8(a) Business Development Program.”

SJR 26 clearly affirms that participation in the 8(a) program is a critical component of Alaska’s economy. Alaska Native corporations and tribally owned entities have used this program to create thousands of jobs across the state, including in rural and underserved communities, while building a skilled workforce and expanding opportunities for Alaska residents.

The revenue generated through 8(a) participation is not abstract, but is reinvested directly into our communities through shareholder dividends, scholarships, workforce development, health care, cultural preservation, infrastructure, and essential services. These investments strengthen families, support local economies, and help ensure long-term economic stability for all of Alaska.

SJR 26 recognizes that the U.S. Small Business Administration’s 8(a) Business Development Program is more than a contracting vehicle, but it is a critical federal policy tool that advances both government mission needs and the federal government’s trust responsibility to Alaska Native peoples. We suggest that the language of the Resolution be extended to cover tribally owned entities as well as ANCs to capture all Alaska Native-owned businesses participating in the 8(a) program.

The unique eligibility of Alaska Native corporations and tribally owned entities under the 8(a) program reflects the framework established under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. 1601) and the government-to-government relationship with federally recognized Tribes. Through 8(a), federal agencies can efficiently meet procurement goals while simultaneously promoting economic inclusion, self-determination, and long-term economic stability for Alaska Native communities.

AFN appreciates the Legislature's clear and strong statement urging the President, Congress, and the Small Business Administration to preserve, defend, maximize, and fully utilize the 8(a) Business Development Program, and to oppose efforts that would weaken or eliminate its unique provisions for Alaska Native Corporations and Tribes.

Alaska Native economic development is foundational to Alaska's economic present and future. We thank the Legislature for recognizing the broad statewide impact of the 8(a) program and for standing in support of Alaska Native self-determination and economic opportunity.

Gunalchéesh,



Ben Mallott
President
Alaska Federation of Natives