



Central Council of the Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska

March 20, 2026

House Resources Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: Support for HJR 44 – Alaska Native Participation in the SBA 8(a) Program

Dear Co-Chairs Frier and Dibert and Members of the House Resources Committee:

On behalf of the Central Council of the Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (Tlingit & Haida), we write in strong support of HJR 44, which affirms the importance of both Alaska Native corporations and entities owned by federally recognized tribes in the state participating in the U.S. Small Business Administration's 8(a) Business Development Program.

We appreciate the House Resources Committee's leadership in advancing a resolution that recognizes the full scope of Alaska Native participation in the 8(a) program, including the role of Tribal governments and their wholly owned enterprises. This recognition reflects the realities on the ground across Alaska and strengthens the Legislature's message in support of economic self-determination.

Tlingit & Haida is a federally recognized Tribal government serving more than 38,000 Tribal citizens across Southeast Alaska and beyond. In alignment with our responsibility to advance economic self-sufficiency and public well-being for our citizens, we established Tlingit Haida Tribal Business Corporation (THTBC), a wholly owned Tribal enterprise that participates in the SBA 8(a) program. Through THTBC and its subsidiaries, we provide professional, technical, and infrastructure services in support of federal missions while creating employment and career pathways for Tribal citizens and Alaska residents.

As reflected in HJR 44, Alaska Native corporations were established through the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) to promote long-term economic stability and self-sufficiency for Alaska Native people, while federally recognized tribes maintain a government-to-government relationship with the United States grounded in inherent sovereignty and the federal trust responsibility. The inclusion of both Alaska Native corporations and Tribal entities in this resolution appropriately recognizes these distinct, yet complementary, frameworks.

For both Alaska Native corporations and Tribal governments, participation in the 8(a) program is one of the most effective tools available to advance economic development. The program supports job creation, workforce development, and the generation of public-purpose revenues that are reinvested into our communities—supporting housing, education, infrastructure, public safety, and cultural preservation. In rural and remote regions like Southeast Alaska, where economic opportunities are limited, the 8(a) program remains a critical pathway to building sustainable local economies.

We also emphasize that participation in the 8(a) program is grounded in federal law and the unique political status of Tribal Nations and Alaska Native entities—not a race-based preference. It reflects longstanding federal policy supporting self-determination, economic inclusion, and fulfillment of the federal trust responsibility.

Tlingit & Haida supports strong oversight and accountability measures that protect the integrity of the 8(a) program. At the same time, we share the Legislature’s concern that efforts to restrict or weaken participation would undermine jobs, rural economies, and the ability of Alaska Native corporations and Tribal governments to meet the needs of their shareholders and citizens.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Alaska State Legislature to pass HJR 44 and to affirm the continued ability of Alaska Native corporations and Tribal entities to participate fully in the 8(a) Business Development Program.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Peterson
President