

Honorable Ben Barnes,  
Chairman, House Appropriations Committee  
Honorable Mark S. Chang,  
Vice Chair, House Appropriations Committee  
Distinguished Members

**Reference: House Bill 794 – “Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs-Indian Heritage and Culture Grant Program and Fund”**

Greetings,

I am writing on behalf of the Pocomoke Indian Nation, Inc., a descendant Tribal Entity indigenous to and located on the lower Eastern Shore of Maryland. Our mission is to protect and preserve the historic and cultural resources of the Pocomoke Tribal Homelands within the State of Maryland. Our community has presented at museums, schools, historic societies, archeological societies, and universities throughout the region and state. We have worked on projects in collaboration with numerous state agencies and were awarded the Maryland State Arts Council Heritage Award for Place in 2024. In the interest of full disclosure, I currently serve as a Commissioner with the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs appointed by Governor Wes Moore in 2023. However, my comments represent my position as a Council member of the Pocomoke Indian Nation and not that of the MCIA.

The language in HB 794, as currently written, creates potential ambiguity as to how the program would be interpreted and administered, specifically in the areas cited below:

9.5–308

Page 2, 3

(A)(4) “ELIGIBLE GRANTEE” MEANS  
(I) A TRIBE WITH MARYLAND INDIAN STATUS OR WITH LEGAL RECOGNITION IN ANOTHER STATE; OR  
(II) A NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION, TRIBE THAT IS INDIGENOUS TO THE STATE, POLITICAL SUBDIVISION, OR STATE AGENCY IN CONSULTATION WITH A STATE-RECOGNIZED TRIBE”

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(D)(2)(III) “IF THE ELIGIBLE GRANTEE IS A NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION, POLITICAL SUBDIVISION, OR STATE AGENCY, A LETTER OF SUPPORT FROM AN INDIAN TRIBAL ENTITY ATTESTING TO APPROPRIATE CONSULTATION WITH THAT TRIBAL ENTITY; AND”

Clarification was sought and received from Rev. Lawrence E. Walker, Sr., Executive Director, Governor’s Office of Community Initiatives indicating the following with respect to the definition of “Indian Tribal Entity” as follows:

“The intended definition of "Indian Tribal entity"/Tribal entity is a tribe with Maryland Indian Status or with legal recognition in another state, or a tribe that is indigenous to the state.”

Therefore, it is recommended the wording under 9.5–308 Page 2, 3, (A)(4) be amended as follows:

~~“ELIGIBLE GRANTEE” MEANS~~ **“INDIAN TRIBAL ENTITY” MEANS:**

- (I) **A TRIBE WITH MARYLAND INDIAN STATUS OR WITH  
LEGAL RECOGNITION IN ANOTHER STATE; OR A TRIBE  
THAT IS INDIGENOUS TO THE STATE, OR**
- (II) **A NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION, ~~TRIBE THAT IS INDIGENOUS  
TO THE STATE,~~ POLITICAL SUBDIVISION, OR STATE AGENCY  
IN CONSULTATION WITH ~~A STATE-RECOGNIZED TRIBE~~ AN  
INDIAN TRIBAL ENTITY.**

Thank you for your attention and consideration to this language clarification as it serves to create a more inclusive benefit to the Indigenous People, heritage, and culture in the State of Maryland.

Respectfully submitted,

Norris C. Howard, Jr.  
Council Member  
Pocomoke Indian Nation, Inc.  
P. O. Box 105  
Allen, Maryland 21810