

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-1501

March 24, 2023

The Honorable Andy Harris
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations,
Subcommittee on Agriculture,
Rural Development, FDA, &
Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sanford Bishop, Jr.
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations,
Subcommittee on Agriculture,
Rural Development, FDA, &
Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Harris and Ranking Member Bishop:

As you craft the fiscal year 2024 Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA, & Related Agencies Appropriations bill, I respectfully request that you include \$900,000 in community project funding for the construction of the Meskwaki Correctional Facility. The entity to receive the funding for this project is the Sac & Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa, located at 349 Meskwaki Road, Tama, IA 52339.

The Sac and Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa is the only federally recognized Indian tribe in the state, with a tribal settlement population of 2,806 individuals. The Tribe currently has no holding facility or jail on the Settlement. This leads to serious safety concerns, financial burdens, and sovereignty challenges.

Meskwaki Tribal police must contract with nearby counties to house Tribal prisoners, spending an average of \$85,000 per year on incarceration and driving long distances off-settlement to the nearest facility; this is an untenable situation and places the Tribe at the mercy of a third party to house its prisoners. There have been several instances in which the contracting counties do not have available space for Tribal prisoners due to their own county needs, leaving the Tribe without a reliable option on or off the settlement.

The creation of an on-settlement correctional facility would mitigate many issues the Tribe is subjected to in providing not only safety to the community, but in addressing the cultural needs of criminal offenders. The Tribe and incarcerated Tribal members are unable to follow tribal tradition when having to turn to third party correctional facilities to house their incarcerated. Being able to maintain tribal rituals and practices while in jail ensures the collectiveness of the community and the family. This is particularly important to the Tribe's judicial and penal system in the context of substance abuse and the growing fentanyl crisis, both of which are often more successfully addressed in the context of community. The Meskwaki Nation has its own practices, beliefs, and rituals, and being able to have an individualized corrections process whereby the

Tribe can ensure Tribal sovereignty is of the utmost importance and will contribute to an effective deterrent to commit a future crime and ensure a steadfast rehabilitation process.

If awarded, this funding would contribute to the construction of a new and first of its kind correctional facility for the Tribe that would reduce financial burdens, safety concerns, and sovereign rights challenges for the Sac and Fox of the Mississippi in Iowa.

I strongly urge the Committee to include this community project funding request in the FY24 Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA & Related Agencies Appropriations bill. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ashley Hinson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line drawn underneath the name.

Ashley Hinson

Member of Congress

Committee on Appropriations