



The Minnesota Chippewa Tribe

February 14, 2023

Administration
218-335-8581
Toll Free: 888-322-7688
Fax: 218-335-8496
Home Loan
218-335-8582
Fax: 218-335-6925
Economic Development
218-335-8583
Fax: 218-335-8496
Education
218-335-8584
Fax: 218-335-2029
Human Services
218-335-8586
35-8080

Chair Acomb and Committee Members,

I am writing as the Chair of the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa and the President of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, representing a conglomerate of the six Minnesota Chippewa Tribes. The Bois Forte Band and Minnesota Chippewa Tribe support House File 1656. This bill proposes funding that will bridge the gap that stands between Minnesota Tribes and essential Federal funding that is available to Tribal governments through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act.

Let me provide you with one example of why we need the aid provided in House File 1656: Last year, on August 12th, the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe learned that we had received a \$299,000 IJA grant for "Preventing Outages and Enhancing the Resilience of the Electric Grid / Hazard Hardening Formula Grant." The grant is intended to carry out activities that are supplemental to existing hardening efforts and reduce the risk of power lines causing a wildfire; or to reduce the likelihood and consequences of disruptive events.

The funding is awarded directly to MCT, but we must still apply in order to receive it. Applications were due to the Federal government on September 30th, which meant we had six weeks to complete the requirements of the grant. In those six weeks, we were asked to gather the Tribal leaders and come to an agreement as to how the funds would be distributed between the Tribes. We were required to collect "stakeholder input," give notice, and hold a public hearing. There is also a "Head of Government" letter required, and we must make a 15% match in funding. That cost is hard for some of the tribes to cover, and there is a 33% to 100% subgrantee match requirement. We needed to hire a consultant to help us determine the best use of the funds for each tribe, which must be stated in the application. Additionally, we needed staff to help us with the application itself; as you may imagine, there are not many Federal grant writers in Nett Lake.

Fortunately, the application deadline was pushed back to March 31st, but we are still facing the same challenges, and have just a short time more to get the job done in order to access this much needed funding. This is just one example of the many grants that have been made available to Tribal governments in the next several years, each with their own rigorous application process. Without the access provided in this bill, this process may be prohibitive for the Tribes.

For this reason, the Bois Forte Band and Minnesota Chippewa Tribe supports House File 1656. Thank you for your time and consideration,

Cathy Chavers

Chair Cathy Chavers