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December 20, 2023

Honorable Brenda Meade  
Chairperson  
Coquille Indian Tribe  
3050 Tremont Street  
North Bend, OR 97459

Dear Honorable Chairperson Meade,

A few weeks ago, I signed onto a nationally-published article opposing the Coquille Indian Tribe's proposal for a modest gaming project in Medford, Oregon. I did so without speaking first to Coquille leadership and based upon erroneous information. In these times, it is incumbent upon tribal leadership to listen to and learn from each other, particularly where the consequences could be harmful to another native community. Since that article, I have listened to and learned from the Coquille leadership. I write now to indicate my reconsidered opinion and express my full support for the Coquille project in Medford.

Congress terminated the Coquille Indian Tribe in 1954. For decades they were dispossessed of their lands, lifeways, community and culture. In 1989 Congress enacted the Coquille Restoration Act, which restored the Coquille Tribe's federal recognition. That law clearly authorizes the Department of Interior to take lands into trust within a specific five-county geographic area in Southern Oregon and includes no gaming restrictions. The Medford parcel lies within this five-county area and, in my view, clearly qualifies for the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act's Restored Lands Exception.

The Coquille Tribe is pursuing this project to fund essential government services for its members, who have spread across Oregon and beyond because of centuries of discriminatory and harmful federal policies. All revenues from this project will be used to provide services to Tribal members and their families. I urge the Department of the Interior to approve the Coquille Indian Tribe's proposal and encourage all parties to be skeptical of claims being made by opponents to this important project. Indian country is stronger when we support each other's efforts, not when we turn against each other.

Finally, I want to apologize to the Department of the Interior as well for the unfortunate article that criticized the Department of the Interior's proposed revisions to the land into trust regulations, as they might be applied to the Coquille project. The Biden Administration, and in particular Secretary Haaland and Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Newland, are doing a great job advancing the cause of Indian country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marshall Pierite". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial 'M'.

Marshall Pierite  
Chairman,  
Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana

Cc: Honorable Deb Haaland, Secretary, Department of the Interior

Honorable Bryan Newland, Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs