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April 23, 2021

The Honorable David E. Price
Chairman
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on THUD

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on THUD

Dear Chair Price and Ranking Member Diaz-Balart,

I am requesting \$750,000 under the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Economic Development Initiative (EDI) program for the Tohono O'odham Nation's development of a permanent Children's Home in fiscal year 2022.

The funding will be used to support development and construction of a permanent Children's Home that would encompass three group homes respectively for boys, girls and young children in need of housing, care and support services. The Nation currently provides housing and services for fourteen children in two temporary group homes on the Reservation, which are single family residences modified to accommodate the needs of the children and staff. The Nation also provides residential placement for 73 other children through contracts and referrals to temporary residences off the Reservation. The Nation wants to bring the majority of these children home to the Reservation, so that the care and education of the children will reflect O'odham values, language and Himdag (the culture, way of life, and values unique to the O'odham).

The Nation has been working to develop a permanent children's group home for its children for some time, as several of the Nation's group home facilities have had to be closed over the years due to high maintenance and repair costs, health and safety concerns, and fire damage. The Nation has begun some planning and site evaluation, and requests \$750,000 to complete the pre-construction work, which includes planning, evaluation, design and the necessary environmental review for the project. The total estimated construction costs are \$1.8 million. Community partners in this project include the Nation's Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Child Welfare, Division of Community Health, Division of Management of Health, and the Nation's Department of Planning and Economic Development.

This project meets the requirements of the Indian Community Development Block Grant program and eligibility requirements of Section 105 of Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. The project will benefit low-income tribal members, some of the most needy and vulnerable Tohono O'odham children, who have no income, parental support or permanent shelter, who are in the custody of the Nation's Health and Human Services, Child Welfare Division, and in need of shelter and support services. The project will address inequities

that affect Native American communities and youth, by providing on-reservation, community-based and culturally relevant housing and care for the Nation's children, rather than placing them in temporary, off-reservation facilities, where they are separated from their community and O'odham culture, values, language and traditions.

Although the Nation does not have zoning requirements per se, construction of the project would comply with applicable protocols for construction on the Reservation. The project will impact beneficiaries of HUD's rental assistance programs to the extent that the Nation's housing authority, the Tohono O'odham Ki:Ki Association, would regain the housing stock that currently is being used for the temporary children's home, and would be able to use that for other housing needs, including providing housing for low-income tenants eligible to receive rental assistance.

The Nation's Departments of Planning and Economic Development and Health and Human Services have devoted significant staff hours and resources to planning, site selection (including research and study by the Department of Water Resources), visiting neighboring tribal group homes, consultation with the current Children's Home Supervisors and staff, and other preparatory activities necessary to initiate the children's home project. The Nation will be able to obligate appropriated funds and complete pre-construction activities (planning, evaluation, design and environmental review) within 12 months of when the funds are awarded; the Nation expects that it would be able to complete construction within a year and a half after completing the pre-construction activities.

This proposal is valuable use of taxpayer money as a Children's Home on the Reservation will better protect the children's health, safety and welfare, and ensure more coordinated and centralized provision of services. It will also allow for more efficient supervision of the children and reduce the costs of locating and financing foster and residential off-reservation care for Tohono O'odham children, which costs the tribe millions of dollars every year.

I appreciate your time and consideration of this important project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Raúl M. Grijalva". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress