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April 20, 2022

The Honorable Mike Quigley
Chairman
Subcommittee on Financial Services and
General Government
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Steve Womack
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Financial Services and
General Government
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Chair Quigley and Ranking Member Womack,

I am requesting \$400,000 under the FY 23 Small Business Administration, Small Business Initiatives program for the International Sonoran Desert Alliance's proposal to construct a Business Support Center and Co-working space within a historic town plaza.

The town plaza is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and in the rural and geographically isolated community of Ajo, Arizona. Ajo is a former mining town that has struggled with persistent economic stagnation, high unemployment and high poverty since mining operations shuttered in the mid-1980's. The International Sonoran Desert Alliance has been working on revitalization and creative reuse efforts in the community of Ajo for the past 15 years. This particular project will build on a nexus of micro-businesses that are taking advantage of these revitalization efforts in the historic town center and are looking to leverage emerging opportunities in visitation and Geo-tourism.

The project scope of work will include the build-out of 12,000 sq. ft. of un-redeveloped space on the second floor of a historic structure originally constructed in 1917. The space will house a business support center and co-working space designed to serve micro-businesses and creative entrepreneurs. Services will include access to capital, technical assistance, digital communications support, staffing assistance, and shared workspace (including fulfillment and fabrication space). The Ajo Business Support Center will build off of recent successful initiatives to create a fertile ecosystem for entrepreneurs including Kickstart Ajo and Ajo Artisans Online.

The full redevelopment includes: Architectural and Engineering (\$25,000), Permitting (\$1,500), Demising Wall Construction (\$50,000), Window Repairs (\$17,500), Concrete Floor Treatments (\$30,000), Painting (\$30,000), Water Service Extension (\$15,500), Restroom Remodel (\$17,500), Kitchenette Buildout (\$17,500), HVAC (\$75,000), Electrical Service Upgrade (\$17,000), Lighting and Branch Circuits (\$50,000), ADA Alterations (\$18,500), and a construction contingency of \$15,000.

Main Streets are a key driver to equitable economic recovery. This project will support a group of micro businesses in an under-served region that includes not only the unincorporated community of Ajo, but also tribal communities on the western Tohono O'odham Nation. Despite

the perception that agriculture dominates in rural America, a 2017 study by the USDA highlighted that fewer than 5% of the rural workforce work in agriculture. With the growing consensus that traditional industry cannot save rural America from depopulating and being left behind, the importance of place-based, locally driven solutions is becoming increasingly clear. Small businesses are by far the largest rural employers and there is a growing body of evidence that creating a supportive ecosystem for small business and entrepreneurship is one of the best ways to generate wealth and build resiliency. By leveraging their long history and partnerships the International Sonoran Desert Alliance's seeks to ensure that small businesses have access to the tools they need to take advantage of emerging opportunities toward increased job creation and community health.

This is a shovel-ready capital project and will not require additional funding.

I appreciate your consideration of this important project.

Sincerely,

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

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress