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October 5th, 2023

Alejandra Y. Castillo
Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development
Economic Development Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW, Suite 71014
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Assistant Secretary Castillo,

I am pleased today to write in strong support of the North Olympic Peninsula Recompete Coalition's (NOPRC) application to Phase 1 of the U.S. Economic Development Administration's (EDA) Distressed Area Recompete Pilot Program.

Located on the Olympic Peninsula, the NOPRC is a new coalition of members from both Clallam and Jefferson Counties, as well as area Tribes. In addition to the more than 111,000 residents who call the two-county region home, there are six federally recognized Tribes who have faced exacerbated economic challenges. Washington state is the nation's second-largest producer of timber in the US, as well as the sixth-largest employer of maritime industry jobs. Challenges like the decline of the timber industry have been and continue to contribute to the high Prime-Age Employment Gap (PAEG) in the region, particularly among the tribal population. This funding would enable the NOPRC to help the legacy timber and maritime industries evolve, while preparing students for living wages and in-demand jobs in those industries.

With strong support from key regional industries and businesses, as well as service providers that support workers, the NOPRC is committed to working together to solve the PAEG and improve the local economy. With this funding, the NOPRC aims to emphasize job creation, increase workforce development, and improve the availability of support services through specific investments in legacy industries like timber and maritime. Through partnerships with organizations like Peninsula College and the Northwest School of Wooden Boatbuilding, the NOPRC aims to narrow the pre-existing skills gap amongst students in the region by providing more opportunities for specialized skill development for across the region. By providing an opportunity for skill learning, the NOPRC will reduce barriers to employment while also reflecting the labor needs of local maritime and timber businesses.

With this proposal, the NOPRC seeks to build a model that other regions can adapt and modify to improve their own futures, including improved access to support services for both students

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and employers in the region. This project will set both students and maritime and timber industries in the two-county region up for success, and I am excited by the partnerships and projects that are emerging from the collective approach of this coalition. This funding, if awarded, would be transformational in the NOPRC's efforts to tackle the economic hurdles within the community, particularly in closing the PAEG.

I strongly support the NOPRC's application to Phase 1 of the EDA's Distressed Area Recompete Pilot Program, and I urge your fair and full consideration of their proposal. Should you have any questions, please contact Emma Abraham in my Tacoma district office at Emma.Abraham@mail.house.gov or 253-272-3515.

Sincerely,

Derek Kilmer



Member of Congress