

STATE CAPITOL
P.O. BOX 942849
SACRAMENTO, CA 94249-0045
(916) 319-2045
FAX (916) 319-2145
SENIOR CONSULTANT
LINDA SACKS

California State Legislature



CALIFORNIA LEGISLATIVE NATIVE AMERICAN CAUCUS

JAMES C. RAMOS, CHAIR
ASSEMBLYMEMBER, FORTY-FIFTH DISTRICT

11/21/24

The Honorable Wendy Thomas
Chair, El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
330 Fairlane Court
Placerville CA 95667

Dear Chair Thomas,

As the Chair of the California Native American Legislative Caucus, I am writing to express my strong support for the Youth Perinatal Residential Facility located at 2761 Sands Road in Rescue, California, and respectfully request the approval of the grading and building permits, already approved by the fire department and building department. This residential facility is not only crucial—it is lifesaving. Designed to serve native pregnant teens who are homeless, at risk of homelessness and vulnerable to the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW), this residential facility will provide essential support to some of the most marginalized and at-risk members of our native community.

The passage of AB 133 (2021) represents a commitment by the State of California to address urgent needs in communities that have long been underserved. This law clearly mandates that projects like this one be prioritized to serve vulnerable populations and has designated this residential facility as a ministerial project, exempting it from local zoning and CEQA requirements to expedite development. The mandate under Welfare & Institutions Code Section 5960.3(a), which specifically governs projects funded by BHCIP grants under AB 133, clearly states:

“Notwithstanding any other law, a facility project funded by a grant pursuant to this chapter shall be deemed consistent and in conformity with any applicable local plan, standard, or requirement, and allowed as a permitted use, within the zone in which the structure is located, and **shall not be subject to a conditional use permit, discretionary permit, or any other discretionary reviews or approvals.** (*emphasis added*)”

The grading permit (#0372970) for the two-acre site was submitted in February 2024, and the building permit (#0374255) for the 7,200 sq. ft. residential facility was submitted in April 2024. Both the local fire department and the county building department have signed off on the project, yet it remains pending solely because the planning department inexplicably has delayed final approval. Each day of delay in issuing these permits puts

lives at risk. The immediate approval of these permits would bring this vital residential facility one step closer to becoming a reality.

The grant recipients, Native Directions Inc. and HomeCA, an urban tribal entity and a nonprofit, respectively, have actively requested meetings with members of the Board of Supervisors, the planning department, Assemblymember Patterson, Senator Alvarado-Gil and Congressman McClintock. With those open to discussions, they have met to answer questions about the project and have worked to address and mitigate concerns raised by both county officials and some residents in Rescue.

In addition, despite being exempt from CEQA, the grant recipients have incorporated extensive safety measures into their design. The late Supervisor John Hidahl provided valuable guidance on fire safety, and as a result, the project includes a modern fire sprinkler system and a 200-foot fire clearance surrounding the 7,200 sq. ft., 16-bedroom residential facility. This residential facility will serve up to 16 native teens, along with their infants and young children, totaling up to a maximum of 40 individuals. It is a non-medical residential facility, incorporating a non-medical social model of care for Substance Use Disorder (SUD) support that is culturally sensitive and designed to meet the unique needs of young, native pregnant women.

El Dorado County currently has 43 residential facilities serving various vulnerable populations, yet none of them serve the specific needs of Native American pregnant teens. This residential facility is different from other existing facilities, and it fills an essential gap. The standard of care and regulatory oversight will be consistent with similar facilities, as this project will be licensed and monitored by a state agency to ensure the highest quality of support and care.

The intent of AB 133 is unmistakable: to provide life-saving support to those in need by building essential facilities and eliminating unnecessary barriers to their construction. This project exemplifies that purpose. I strongly urge the county to release the necessary grading and building permits without delay, allowing construction to begin and ensuring that this residential facility can soon provide the critical care and stability that these young native women and their children so urgently need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James C. Ramos", written in a cursive style.

James C. Ramos
Chair, California Native American Legislative Caucus
Assemblymember, 45th District

CC: Members of the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors