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May 6, 2026

Senate Resources Committee
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, AK 99801
Submitted via email

Re: AMA support of HJR 44

Dear Members of the Senate Resources Committee:

The Alaska Miners Association (AMA) writes to support HJR 44, an Act supporting the ability of Alaska Native Corporations and entities owned by federally recognized tribes in the state to participate in the United States Small Business Administration's 8(a) Business Development Program.

AMA is a professional membership trade organization established in 1939 to represent the mining industry in Alaska. AMA's more than 1,400 members come from eight statewide branches: Anchorage, Denali, Fairbanks, Haines, Juneau, Kenai, Ketchikan/Prince of Wales, and Nome. Alaska's miners are individual prospectors, geologists, engineers, suction dredge miners, small family mines, junior mining companies, major mining companies, Alaska Native Corporations, and the contracting sector that supports Alaska's mining industry.

As you know, Alaska is a young state where distance, infrastructure gaps, high costs, and small populations make private-sector development harder than almost anywhere else in America. That reality is especially true in rural Alaska, and it is thanks to our rich resources that the statewide economy is able to sustain itself. The federal 8(a) Business Development Program tremendously supports the state's economic sectors, and it is a foundation of the success of many industries, especially mining. Our industry depends on strong local contractors, skilled trades, logistics providers, environmental professionals, construction companies, camp service providers, engineers, fuel suppliers, aviation partners, and heavy-equipment operators. In Alaska, many of those capabilities are built or supported by Alaska Native Corporations, tribal enterprises, and Native-owned businesses.

A recent narrative has brought criticisms of the federal 8(a) program. While AMA supports strong oversight, anti-fraud enforcement, and overall accountability of public dollars, we do not support dismantling an entire program that works. Isolated concerns are not an excuse to weaken one of Alaska's most important economic-development tools.



For Alaska Native Corporations, tribal entities, and the businesses they own, the 8(a) program is not a political favor or a loophole. It is a practical economic development tool. It helps create jobs, build business capacity, train workers, support shareholders, and keep federal contracting dollars working in Alaska communities that too often face limited private-sector opportunity. This is critical for Alaska mining. We need more contractors who can work safely in remote places, and more local businesses that can support exploration and development. We need more trained workers, more logistics capacity, more construction capacity, and more Alaska-based companies capable of participating in the work that resource development creates. A strong 8(a) business sector helps make that possible.

AMA urges this Committee, and the full Legislature to support HJR 44. The 8(a) program is a working economic engine for Alaska, and one that supports jobs, communities, contractors, shareholders, infrastructure, exploration, national security, energy independence, and responsible mineral development.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D Skibinski".

Deantha Skibinski
Executive Director
Alaska Miners Association