



February 7, 2024

Chair Reynolds, Vice Chair Nguyen, Vice Chair Scharf, and Members of the House Committee on Early Childhood and Human Services

RE: House Bill 4131 – Individual Development Account Initiative, Support

Chair Reynolds, Vice Chair Nguyen, Vice Chair Scharf, and members of the Committee. For the record, my name is Creeana Bort, I am a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation, and I represent the NAYA Action Fund located in Portland, OR. Founded by the community for the community, NAYA Action Fund is a 501(c)(4) social welfare organization with a mission to expand political advocacy and build electoral power in partnership with the Native community. The NAYA Action Fund provides tools to shape public policy, cultivate leadership, and elect champions for issues impacting Native people. Our vision of systemic change is youth centered, family driven, and elder guided. I write in support of House Bill 4131 – \$10 Million General Fund Ask for Individual Development Accounts.

Economic prosperity serves as a beacon of hope for the American Indian/Alaska Native community in Oregon. It's no secret that these programs provide the necessary tools to attain financial stability and awareness. At our affiliated organization, the Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA), 79% of savers identify as Indigenous. We, as a cultural organization, value asset building, which will lay a foundation for the success of our next seven generations. Wealth and stability are disproportionately harder to come by within Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) communities; the IDA program eliminates those barriers, allowing our community the opportunity to attain homeownership, higher education, owning a car, and repairing their homes. NAYA's IDA program offers more than just a match savings program; it also offers financial security and freedom. We are working to provide the tools that will encourage the sharing of financial knowledge across generations. In my five years at NAYA, I've been able to see the direct outcomes from what funding a program, like Individual Development Accounts, can do.

To watch as people who I've known for years lift themselves out of poverty thanks to the various asset categories IDA offers, is a reason why I do this work. From finding a car that leads them to a new job, or affording home repair to then have a clean safe home that allows their children to thrive. We have seen people walk our halls that are living success stories, eager to share their story and encourage others to apply for IDA's. HB 4131 works to give Oregonians the opportunity to be financially free. It secures a way out of poverty by further funding a program that we know has a proven track record of providing financial support and prosperity to our communities. On behalf of the NAYA Action Fund, we urge you to pass House Bill 4131.

Sincerely,

Creeana Bort
Policy and Advocacy Organizer
NAYA Action Fund