To Pennsylvania Legislators:

I hereby offer this letter of support for the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania, a long-established tribal entity whose members are all direct descendants of Lenape ancestors who remained in Pennsylvania, in their endeavor to achieve formal recognition by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. It is inconceivable that our Commonwealth has yet to bestow the proper recognition and rights that the Lenape Nation of PA members are far overdue as the first people of this land. They alone possess unique history of the Lenape who remained behind, honoring their ancestors and their descendants, and retaining the vast amount of culture and tradition that has been passed down from Lenape elders here in our Commonwealth.

It is well past due for Pennsylvania to join our neighbor states of New Jersey and Delaware in recognizing their own Lenape descendants. For many years the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania has worked diligently as stewards and caretakers of the Delaware River, the land, and the people. Their high appreciation and protection of the natural environment and the watershed is a valuable asset to the Commonwealth. For over 20 years they have been engaged in partnerships with over 130 organizations who work together to reach these goals. Partners include environmental organizations, faith-based organizations, youth groups, elders’ societies, historical societies, businesses, government officials, and others. The Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania generously shares Lenape language classes, education programs about the Delaware river, and history and culture - not just with their members, but with all who are interested.

The Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania has struggled for over 30 years attempting to garner recognition as the remaining indigenous people of Pennsylvania. They have sent delegations and representatives to stand before various committees seeking recognition, beginning in the 1990’s with Chief William Thompson, and continuing as recently as May 1st 2023, when they held a rally on the capitol steps in honor of Tamanend Day. **Several Senators, House Representatives, and other officials have pledged their support of the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania, but this has yet to lead to action.**

As the most minor act of reparations for the harm that was historically done to the Lenape people who remained and suffered persecution, discrimination, and forced assimilation within their Pennsylvania homeland for hundreds of years, Pennsylvania should recognize the existence and legitimacy of its indigenous people still residing in the state. Don’t we, as Pennsylvanians collectively, owe our Lenape neighbors at least that much? These indigenous keepers of the lands and waters were forced to hide for much too long and deserve to be recognized and given rights of self determination as outlined in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights for Indigenous Peoples adopted in 2007. The work the LNPA is doing to not only preserve the true history of the Lenapehokink (Lenape Homeland) but to also invite us all into a more harmonious and peaceful relationship with these lands is crucial at this point in our collective human history.

Our Pennsylvania State Legislators MUST affirm the rights and acknowledge the legacy of the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania.