



**SHERWOOD VALLEY BAND
OF POMO INDIANS**

August 27, 2025

Chair Caballero and Committee Members
Senate Appropriations Committee
California State Capitol, Room 412
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Opposition to AB 831

Dear Chair Caballero and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Sherwood Valley Band of Pomo Indians, we respectfully oppose AB 831. This bill lacks the alleged unanimous support among California tribes, has advanced without meaningful consultation of broader tribal interests, and threatens our inherent right to create legitimate revenue streams to support our people.

For tribes like ours—operating in rural Northern California communities—traditional economic development faces significant challenges. While we have established gaming operations, smaller tribal enterprises like ours often lack the scale and resources of large, well-established gaming operations that dominate prime markets. Policies such as those proposed in AB 831 restrict emerging digital commerce opportunities that could provide essential supplemental revenue streams, effectively limiting the economic diversification options available to tribes like ours to the advantage of wealthier tribes aligned with powerful gaming interests.

Digital platforms offer vital opportunities for tribes to diversify revenue sources beyond traditional gaming and fund essential services such as healthcare, education, housing, food security, and social programs. The need for economic diversification is urgent, as our community continues to struggle with numerous disparities:

- **Housing Shortages and Overcrowding:** There is a severe shortage of safe, adequate housing. Many families live in overcrowded homes, often with multiple generations under one roof. These conditions reduce quality of life and increase health risks, particularly for vulnerable populations.
- **Homelessness:** The lack of affordable and available housing has led to rising rates of homelessness within our tribal community. Tribal members experiencing homelessness are especially vulnerable and face significant barriers to employment, healthcare, and basic dignity.
- **Economic Insecurity and Poverty:** Nearly 1 in 3 residents in California tribal areas live below the poverty line. In our community, many individuals and families struggle to afford basic needs, with limited opportunities for stable, long-term employment.
- **Unemployment and Lack of Job Opportunities:** Economic development in our remote area is constrained, and reliable job opportunities are scarce. Many tribal members must travel significant distances for employment, but access to transportation is often limited or unavailable.
- **Transportation Barriers:** Rural isolation continues to be a major hurdle. Inadequate public and private transportation options make it difficult to access jobs, education,

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healthcare, and other essential services—further entrenching cycles of poverty and dependence.

Native households in rural communities like ours face food insecurity rates as high as 92% in some areas, compared to the national average of 14%. These challenges demand urgent attention. Eliminating legitimate, regulated digital enterprise will only deepen the disparities our people face, erode our tribal self-sufficiency, and contradict California's stated commitment to equity and inclusion for all tribal nations.

We urge the Committee to reject AB 831 and instead support policy solutions that empower all tribes to diversify economically, address systemic challenges, and chart a path toward sustainable self-governance and prosperity.

Respectfully,

Buffy W. Bourassa

Secretary

Sherwood Valley Band of Pomo Indians