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SOUTHEAST ALASKA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

February 19, 2018

Josh Silverman
CEO, Etsy, Inc.
117 Adams Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Dear Mr. Silverman:

Southeast Conference is the federally recognized Economic Development District for Southeast Alaska. The Conference's objectives are to support strong economies, healthy communities and a quality environment. Our objectives include support for the arts as an important, sustainable contributor to the economy in our region.

I am writing to express my concern about Etsy's emerging policy to apparently prohibit artists from selling art and handcraft made of ivory and marine mammal products. My concern is that this policy is based on the uniformed and erroneous presumption that Alaska Native art using these materials are made from threatened or endangered species.

We support Etsy's business model because it is offering an important e-commerce outlet opportunity for Alaska Native artists, who live in remote areas and do not have access to traditional markets for their artistic pieces. However, Etsy's new policy toward global homogenization flies in the face of the company's innovative practice and dismisses Federal laws such as the Marine Mammal Protection Act which allows Alaska Natives to work with, and sell cultural art pieces from legally procured marine mammal fur, walrus ivory, whale tooth and bone from specific animal populations not listed on the Federal threatened or endangered species lists.

The sale of Native arts and handcraft arises from ancient traditions of creating and exchanging Native handicrafts and has been a cornerstone of Native culture and societies for thousands of years, with these fine pieces prominently displayed in some of the world's most important museums. Today many Native artists are dependent on the sale of arts and handcraft for their basic livelihood. Many Native artists live in communities where their economies are severely depressed or non-existent and the sale of handcraft is the only source of generating revenues.

Etsy's policy restricting the sale of items from illegal ivory and marine mammal products seems rationale on its face. However, the application of an overly board policy damages law abiding Native artisan's access e-commerce markets. We understand Etsy is possibly reconsidering its polices. We encourage you to work with artists and organizations such as ours to ensure you can offer legal and sustainable products that will benefit Native cultures and their livelihoods and ensures your customer base has the opportunity to access the unique Alaska Native arts, cultures and history.

Southeast Conference respectfully asks you to reconsider your policy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J. Robert Venables". The signature is fluid and cursive.

J. Robert Venables, Executive Director