



NATIONAL INDIAN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

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NIEA Resolution 2013-01

TITLE: SUPPORT A U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE REPORT ASSESSING THE BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION

WHEREAS, the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) was established in 1970 for the purpose of advocating, planning, and promoting the unique and special educational needs of American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; and

WHEREAS, NIEA, as the largest national Indian organization of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian educators, administrators, parents, and students in the United States, provides a forum to discuss and act upon issues affecting the education of Indian and Native people; and

WHEREAS, through its unique relationship with Indian nations and tribes, the federal government has established programs and resources to meet the educational needs of American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians, residing on and off their reserved or non-reserved homelands; and

WHEREAS, the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) directly oversees a total of 183 elementary, secondary, residential and peripheral dormitories across 23 states that serve roughly 41,000 Indian students living on or near reservations; and

WHEREAS, under the BIE system, an additional 126 schools are tribally controlled under Public Law 93-638 Indian Self Determination contracts or contracts under the Tribally Controlled Grant Schools Act (Public Law 100-297); and

WHEREAS, BIE's mission is to provide Indian students quality educational opportunities starting in early childhood in accordance with a tribe's need for cultural and economic well-being; and

WHEREAS, based on estimates from a 2011 study using national assessment data, in 4th grade, BIE students on average scored 22 points lower for reading and 14 points lower for math than Indian students attending public schools and the gap in scores is even

wider when the average for BIE students is compared to the national average for non-Indian students; and

WHEREAS, the high school graduation rate for BIE students in 2011 was 61 percent, placing BIE in the bottom half among graduation rates for Indian students attending public schools in states where BIE schools are located; and

WHEREAS, BIE schools are primarily funded through the Department of the Interior, however, it also receives annual formula grants from the Department of Education, similar to public schools; and

WHEREAS, the structure of funding and administrative bureaucracy for the BIE is causing significant challenges for the BIE and Indian schools to improve student academic performance; and

WHEREAS, while the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), which oversees funding for the BIE, has undertaken another realignment of its administrative functions, it is unclear to what extent, if at all, the changes will result in improved services for BIE and its schools; and

WHEREAS, the BIA implemented its most recent realignment without seeking input from a broad range of education and BIE stakeholders; and

WHEREAS, the BIA failed to develop a strategic plan with specific goals and measures for itself or BIE or strategies to achieve goals; and

WHEREAS, the BIA has not updated its workforce plan or assessed Indian Affairs' realignment and its impact on BIE to ensure the agency has the right staff in place with the appropriate skills to effectively meet the needs of BIE schools and their ability to serve Native students; and

WHEREAS, the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report to Congress in September 2013 highlighting issues reducing the effectiveness of the BIE and proposed possible methods to increase effectiveness; and

WHEREAS, the GAO stated in that same report that it intends to issue a second report that will compare funding and expenditures for BIE schools to those of nearby public schools; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the NIEA calls on Congress to request a third GAO report on the BIE to analyze the potential effects of shifting funding streams from the BIA to the BIE so that administrative functions and funding allocations are held strictly within the BIE, thus allowing BIE personnel – those who better understand the Native children they serve – with the necessary administrative functions and funding

authority to increase the agency's effectiveness and increase service to Native students;
and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NIEA does hereby request that the GAO provide steps for addressing the issues affecting the BIE as highlighted in the aforementioned report and disseminate findings to tribes, the Secretaries of the Interior and Education, as well as the United States Congress and the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education.

CERTIFICATION

I do hereby certify that the following resolution was dully considered and passed by the National Indian Education Association on November 2, 2013 at which a quorum of the membership was present.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pam Agoyo', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Pam Agoyo
President