

NAGSA Testimony Statement

Mr. Royd R. Lee

President

Native American Grant School Association

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

I am Royd Lee, the current President of Native American Grant School Association (NAGSA). I would like to take this time to write this written testimony on behalf of the schools that work with our Native American children from both the Navajo Nation and Hopi Tribe from two states in Arizona and New Mexico.

I'm an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation, I am twenty-six years old. I come from a small community in Northeastern Arizona called Shonto, Arizona. I'm a product of Shonto Boarding School before the school converted to a Grant School under Public Law 100-297. I'm currently serving as an elected school board member for Shonto Preparatory School, I am currently started by the second term of office. I got elected to this position at age twenty-one, making me the youngest elected official in such office. I am born and continue to live on the Navajo Nation, growing up was a great challenge, in fact, I still feel for our students that lived in a third world condition. Many families still have no electricity, running water, lack of paving bus routes; the factors do play a role in student success.

The key objective of NAGSA testifying before you today is to advocate for our schools. Each of our schools faces independent challenges, overall our schools still lack the necessary resources to ensure that our students receive the best educational needs. Our schools truly depend on the funding for our schools, without it the education community will vanish.

Currently, NAGSA represents sixteen schools also with two residential halls that provide a secondary home for our Native American students. There is a total of eleven schools on the Navajo Nation and for the record that the schools are: Pinon Community School, Shiprock Associated School, Inc. Wide Ruins Community School, Tiisyaakin Residential Hall, Naasts'aaan Community School, Hanaadli Community School/Dormitory, Inc., Winslow Residential Hall, Dilcon Community School, Black Mesa Community School, Little Singer Community School, and lastly my school Shonto Preparatory School. NAGSA has seven schools located on the Hopi Tribe, just like the Navajo schools, for the record the schools are: Hotevilla-Bacavi Community

School, Hopi Junior/Senior High School, Monecopi Day School, Hopi Day School, Keams Canyon Elementary School, First Mesa Elementary School, and lastly Second Mesa Day School. All the schools that were mention are “Tribally Control Schools that are locally controlled by elected school board members, under the provisions under Public Law 100-297”.

NAGSA is very obliged to have me as their president, I try to be active among my schools by attending school board meetings, parent meetings, attending Hopi Board of Education meetings, be present at our NAGSA events, visiting schools, just to name a new. However, since becoming president, I haven't all schools, especially in New Mexico. However during my visits, I look at the key issues that our schools face, I listen to school's concerns at the school board meetings. Yet I've haven't seen or heard any top tribal official visit the schools to actually look as well as to eavesdrop the issues our school face. I'm glad under NAGSA's leadership we were able to hold a legislative session to hear school's concerns. I compare the issues that I see at the schools I visit. Overall NAGSA's position would like to support to keep the funding the same for all schools, avoid budget cuts. President Trump's budget to congress is a recommendation in a form of a proposal. Keeping the funding at the current level will ensure that our Native American students have a place to go to school, have a safe well maintain the structure.

Comparing our schools to schools in Phoenix metropolitan area isn't right. In fact, we are so isolated majority of school's have no paved roads that lead up to the schools, our bus routes are not all on paving roads, on the both the Navajo Nation and Hopi Tribe we have harsh winter conditions when at times schools are canceled. All of our schools face teacher shortages, low pay for teachers, lack of teacher housing or none for some our schools, poor school buildings, lack of school safety. NAGSA is finding ways to help our member schools the best we can. As the president, I took upon myself to be the observer of the key issues. NAGSA proudly support the school's resolution.

NAGSA shall continue to advocate not limited to supporting tenacities for our member schools, I'm here to humbly ask this committee that I strongly represent the grassroots level. Many of our schools need new school construction funding for Hotevilla-Bacavi Community School, Little Singer, Shonto Preparatory School, Hopi Day School, Black Mesa Community School, and Hanaadli Community School/Dormitory. Many of our schools need to have paved roads to the school completed with new parking lots: Little Singer Community School, Black Mesa Community School, and Pinon Community School. My main concern is the unsafe drinking water on the Hopi Reservation which heavily impacts First Mesa Elementary School, Second Mesa Day School with the treats of Arsenic, lastly many of schools need funding for school security also safety implantations.

Our Native American students are suffering enough within third world conditions not only limited to have poverty levels. The students also the schools that NAGSA is representing deserve much better. I'm here to kindly inform you that these aren't Republican or Democrat issue, politicians need to learn the golden rule on education, it's more than a teacher in the classroom, and it's about support staff that makes school function. In the words of President Reagan "Government is the problem". I humbly request that all of the governments from the Tribal, State, and Federal level stop abusing the education system, let Every Student Succeeds Act take the course, don't appeal or replace it. With the changes that made at the D.C level, our schools are too busy meeting the federal or state requirements, which also disables our students' learning environment.

Thank you for allowing for me to testify before you today, this is a life learning experience for me. Thank you again.