

OPENING STATEMENT

Good morning to you all, and a warm welcome to all our witnesses here today. Thank you for traveling here.

Let’s be clear our country has a deeply rooted, sometimes horrifying, history with Native Americans and boarding schools. From children being forcibly abducted from their homes to children choosing to attend these schools.

The role of Congress and this Subcommittee is to ensure that proper oversight is provided for tribal programs this includes programs that affect Native children.

Today’s hearing is one that we should not be having, not in a physical sense but on moral grounds. Today we will investigate the health and safety risks of Native Children at BIE boarding schools.

Our hearing will look more in depth about what is happening at the Chemawa Indian School, one of the oldest continuously operating boarding schools in the United States.

Students from this school come from seventeen states with more than a third coming from Arizona.

Some students attend boarding schools to get away from difficult home lives or continue a legacy of generations of relatives, who have attended the school.

Although each reason varies for attendance, boarding schools are sometimes viewed as a haven or an escape from a rather challenging upbringing on the reservation.

Yet, as of June 2018, four current and former Chemawa students have died from reported negligence towards health concerns, lack of mental health services, and ill-advised suspensions and expulsions leading to later accidents.

I would like to keep this opening statement short, so we can honor the stories of the student's families and former staff, who traveled a long way to share their words with us.

A special thank you to our colleagues, who brought our attention to the various issues surrounding this school. My hope today is that we begin to get the answers needed to protect Native students attending BIE boarding schools.

I would now like to recognize the Ranking Member, Mr. Cook, for his opening statement.