



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

July 23, 2019

The Honorable Ruben Gallego
Chairman
U.S. House Subcommittee on Indigenous Peoples of the United States
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Paul Cook
Ranking Member
U.S. House Subcommittee on Indigenous Peoples of the United States
1329 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

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Re: Support for H.R. 895, the Tribal School Federal Insurance Parity Act of 2019

Dear Chairman Gallego and Ranking Member Cook:

I write on behalf of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), the oldest and largest organization serving the interests of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal nations and citizens, to express NCAI's support for the immediate consideration and passage of H.R. 895, the Tribal School Federal Insurance Parity Act.

Access to healthcare is a concern for all Americans – especially within tribal communities. In 2010, Congress intended to improve healthcare access by authorizing tribal nations utilizing Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA) programs to participate in the Federal Employee Health Benefit (FEHB) program. Unfortunately, after consideration by the Department of the Interior and Office Personnel Management (OPM), it was determined that Tribal Grant School employees (25 U.S.C. Ch. 27) are ineligible for FEHB, even though Tribal Grant Schools operate under the ISDEAA model.

Tribal Grant School employees should have access to FEHB. We thank Representative Dusty Johnson for introducing H.R. 895. This legislation will ensure Tribal Grant School employees have access to this vital program, thereby improving prospects for recruiting and retaining excellent teachers at tribal schools and reducing the healthcare costs of tribal schools so that school resources can be appropriately focused on education.

Tribal nations have greatly appreciated the work of Congress to ensure that the benefits of the FEHB program reach Indian Country. Following NCAI Resolution #TUL-13-063, NCAI urges the prompt passage of this legislation that is vital for Tribal Grant School employees. We look forward to working with you, and should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Nicholas Courtney, NCAI Policy Analyst, at ncourtney@ncai.org.

Respectfully,

Kevin J. Allis
Chief Executive Officer
National Congress of American Indians