

Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the United States  
Hybrid Legislative Hearing  
May 12, 2022 at 1:00 p.m. ET  
Legislative Hearing on H.R. 5444

Questions from Rep. Grijalva for Deborah Parker, Chief Executive Officer, National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition

- 1. As someone who worked previously on truth and healing efforts in Canada, do you have any recommendations for how the federal government should address its role in the creation and implementation of Indian boarding schools?**

**Response:** I recommend that the federal government 1) provide the Commission with authority to subpoena organizations throughout their investigation, 2) survey the cemeteries at every Indian boarding school location, and 3) create an action plan for implementing Commission recommendations.

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Questions from Rep. Leger Fernández for Deborah Parker, Chief Executive Officer, National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition

**After decades of inaction, we are proud of the U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary Deb Haaland's efforts to jumpstart the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative.**

- a. What other efforts would the Coalition like to see alongside this initiative?**

**Response:** An apology from the Biden Administration that directs all twelve (12) cabinets of the Biden Administration to bring forward resolutions on how they will address the genocide of Native children, families, and Tribes.

- b. How would the passage of H.R. 5444 aid these efforts?**

**Response:**

- I. Passage of H.R. 5444 will authorize the Commission to fully investigate the assimilative policies of the U.S. Indian Boarding Schools through:
  - Examining the location of children: Locating and documenting all children still buried at or near boarding school facilities.
  - Documenting ongoing impacts from boarding schools: Compiling evidence of the ongoing effects of intergenerational trauma in American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities and how assimilative policies were meant to destroy Native languages and cultures.
  - Locating church and government records: Locating and analyzing all records on Indian boarding schools; target records include those related to attendance,

infirmary, deaths, land, and other correspondences with subpoenas powers for records.

- II. Passage of H.R. 5444 will aid in the collection of testimony from boarding school attendees, Tribes, and subject matter experts by:
  1. Holding culturally-appropriate public hearings: Provides a public forum for boarding school attendees, victims, families, communities, Native organizations, and tribal leaders to provide testimony on the impacts of Indian boarding schools.
  2. Gathering institutional knowledge from subject matter experts: Testimony would be taken from those who have documents and institutional knowledge relating to Indian Boarding School Policies, including but not limited to testimony from churches, the federal government, state and local governments, individuals, and organizations.
  
- III. Passage of H.R. 5444 directs the Commission to create and distribute findings and recommendations:
  1. Sharing findings publicly: The Act requires a final report on findings and recommendations to be shared with the public and the U.S. government within five (5) years.
  2. Providing recommendations: The Act requires a list of recommendations for legislation and administrative actions to address the impacts of Federal Indian Boarding School Policies, expanding upon pre-established goals—such as investing in restoration of culture and language—and establishing trauma-informed resources.
  
- IV. Finally, passage of H.R. 5444 will allow for investigation beyond the Department of the Interior Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative. Specifically, the Commission would compile all previous research and bring together partners for a comprehensive review of Federal Indian Boarding School Policies and their impacts. In short, passage of H.R. 5444 would allow the Commission to expand upon Interior's work in order to know the magnitude of loss of human life.