



Tribal Education Departments  
National Assembly

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**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES**

**TESTIMONY OF ERIKA EVA CHASE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE HOOPA TRIBAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION AND  
SECRETARY OF TEDNA, REGARDING FY 2019 FUNDING FOR TRIBAL EDUCATION**

**MAY 9, 2018**

Chairman Calvert, Ranking Member McCollum, and Members of the Committee, He:yung/Kile' Ts'ehdiyah Nohtsa:n. Erika Eva Chase, a:who:lye,' Na:tinixwe' awhte hayal Shinnecock qeh iwha:l.' My name is Erika Eva Chase and I am a citizen of the Hoopa Valley Tribe where I am the Executive Director of the Hoopa Tribal Education Association. I also serve as Secretary for the Tribal Education Departments National Assembly ("TEDNA"), a national non-profit membership organization for the Education Departments/Agencies ("TEDs") of American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes. Ts'ehidyah, thank you, for the opportunity to speak today about funding for TEDs. First and foremost, our sincerest gratitude for appropriating funds to support TEDs through Section 2020 grants—especially for increased funding in Fiscal-Year 2017. This Subcommittee clearly values the crucial role of TEDs in providing educational services to Native American students. As this Subcommittee noted in its 2016 report, "TEDs are instrumental in helping tribes build the capacity to oversee the high quality and culturally appropriate education of tribal members."

Today, tribal governments and TEDs are making historic progress in directing educational services—fulfilling Congress's intent after decades of Federal neglect. Although Congress stated a policy supporting local, tribal control of education as early as the 1980s, these measures received significant funding only in recent years. Continued funding is required to maintain and expand vital and successful programs such as Tribal Education Department ("TED") Grants, Sovereignty in Education Enhancement Programs ("SIE"), Johnson O'Malley ("JOM") and BIA Higher Education programs. For this, TEDNA respectfully requests \$5 million to support TEDs in the Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill for Fiscal-Year 2019 so that we are able to serve our Native American students who attend BIE funded schools, other LEAs, and every facet of our tribal citizens' lifelong educational experiences, as I will explain further.

**AUTHORIZATION FOR FUNDING**

Federal funding for TEDs is authorized in the 25 U.S.C. § 2020.

## JUSTIFICATION FOR FUNDING

The Na:tinixwe,' Hupa People, have educated their citizens from time immemorial, and for us and all Tribes education continues to be a sovereign right, a trust obligation, an issue of local control and a sacred responsibility. That we have entrusted a part of the education of our students to our local public school districts speaks to our expectation of the state, local and federal obligation to honor that same responsibility. However, these expectations remain unrealized at a cost that is too high. Currently, in our local Klamath-Trinity Joint Unified School District, which has a population of 94% Native American district wide, only Indian children are dropping out beginning at grade 7 and a staggering 22% of Indian students at our local K-8 school are being suspended in comparison to their non-Indian peers at 0%. Further, according to the Northwest Evaluation Association Measure of Academic Performance (MAP Testing) nearly 71% of our Native American students are performing at "Low or Low Average" levels in Math, Reading, and Language (ELA). It is apparent our tribal students, and those across Indian Country, need and deserve better coordination and collaboration between LEAs, BIE-funded schools and Tribes for their students' success and personal growth as our tribal nations' future leaders.

At the same time, Tribal government involvement in the education of Native American students has been severely limited until recently. In 1988, Congress authorized funding specifically to build Tribal capacity for directly serving Native students in BIE-funded schools – Section §2020. Although unfunded for over 25 years, it was through the commitment of this Subcommittee that eleven tribes were awarded Section §2020 Grants in FY 2015, and comparable appropriation is needed in order to continue forward movement and guarantee success of these vital efforts. The Section §2020 TED grantees and many other TEDs need continued and increased Section §2020 funding so student-centered work and initiatives may continue. A similar authorization for tribal capacity building aimed at *public schools* on Indian reservations has been funded since Fiscal-Year 2012, resulting in the Department of Education's pioneering State-Tribal Education Partnership Program ("STEP"). Congress recognized the importance of this program by statutorily authorizing it in Title VI of the Every Student Succeeds Act. Though important, the STEP program only addresses one aspect of the existing need, and a corresponding funding opportunity for TEDs serving BIE-funded schools is also required to address BIE-funded schools that this Subcommittee knows historically have been drastically underfunded. Undoubtedly, the BIE-funded schools and the students they serve are most in need of the assistance of TEDs.

TEDs are in a unique position to reverse the historic negative outcomes for Native students. Through Section §2020 grants and other initiatives, the important work of developing Tribal educational codes, policies, and standards pertaining to curriculum, personnel, students, facilities, and support programs are under way.

For example, the Hoopa Valley Tribe of California, a former U.S Department of Education Indian Demonstration grantee and TEDNA member, currently operates 14 different education programs, spanning all areas of lifelong learning from Early Head Start to managing a branch of the local community college and providing Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation services aiding our citizens in their education and development from prenatal to PhDs and Vocational Expertise. In my experience as Education Director of the Hoopa Valley Tribe, I can attest to the value of building relationships with LEAs and SEAs, and also the importance of asserting our Tribal Sovereignty and authority of education as it pertains to our tribal citizen students, recognizing many needed

interventions, preventions, services and strategies to enable student and family successes. Most recently, many of the previously stated performance statistics have been directly correlated with Adverse Childhood Experience scores in our community, and the recognition that trauma-informed and culturally responsive techniques must be built into curriculum and instruction models offered to our students to enhance resiliency and social-emotional wellness.

The Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe in Minnesota, a Section §2020 grantee and a TEDNA Member, is developing a program under Section §2020 to address the Tribe's inherent authority over all areas of education. The Tribe operates the Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig BIE-funded school and administers JOM funds for public schools on and near the Tribe's reservation. Through Section §2020 grant funds, they have taken a community based approach, utilizing community and youth input to shape priorities that will develop into tribal education codes and a comprehensive education plan that will be culturally specific to that Tribe. The Section §2020 grant has been a catalyst for Leech Lake's involvement in areas beyond its grant and is making sovereignty in education a reality.

The Section §2020 grant has empowered the Pueblo of Acoma to engage in meaningful consultation with the State of New Mexico Public Education Department and the Local Grant Cibola School District, resulting in data sharing, partnerships to address academic achievement and truancy, and tribal participation on both planning and budget committees.

The Nez Perce Tribe of Idaho, a STEP grantee, has provided a platform for the Tribe's TED and LEAs to work together to improve Native American student performance through partnerships across three federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act programs. Current research indicates that low Native American academic achievement rates correlate with low cultural relevance in curriculum. Many State Education Agencies, acknowledge that they do not have the expertise to provide training or technical assistance that meets the unique educational and cultural needs of Native American Students. The Nez Perce TED has filled this void to provide teacher training for the integration of cultural pedagogy, tribal education standards, and common core standards.

The Gila River Indian Community in Arizona, an SIE grantee, is making strides in developing accountability standards for LEAs serving the Tribe's students. Seven SIE Grants were initially awarded to tribes for the purpose of conducting feasibility studies for Tribal control of schools, which included four school management focus areas: 1) academics, 2) human resources, 3) finances, and 4) governance as a result of many requests of the BIA/BIE to give more Tribes control of education in their tribal communities. At Gila River, their SIE project is still underway, and for the first time in over 20 years the community has the opportunity to gauge growth and progress in the four assessment areas and many questions have been raised. Consequentially, standards are being set for school operations and performance, as well as measures of school accountability to the community. Tribes are now requiring LEAs and SEAs to account for their years of substandard performance and identifying improvements that must be made so that our tribal students and communities are served better.

The Section §2020 grantees are only just beginning to demonstrate the positive impact they can have in Native American education. We want to continue our important work and build on our fledgling success, and continued – and increased – funding will help us do that.

The successes of TEDs, like that of the Hoopa Valley Tribe and others, demonstrate the positive impact and high need for Tribal involvement in Native American education. Moreover, the initiative of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe shows that with the support of this Subcommittee, the Section §2020 funds will *facilitate local tribal control* in all matters relating to Native American education on reservations and implementing programs to increase graduation rates and post-secondary school readiness, and foster much-needed cooperation and coordination with entities carrying out education services and programs. More specifically, Tribes will be able to 1) support early education initiatives and develop culturally relevant curriculum and assessments; 2) increase tribal participation through TEDs providing coordination, administrative support services, technical assistance to schools and education programs on Indian reservations, including maintaining and sharing electronic data regarding Native American students; and 3) develop and enforce tribal educational codes, including tribal educational policies and tribal standards applicable to curriculum, personnel, students, facilities, and support programs. As Congress has recognized, these three areas are core educational functions that are most appropriately left to Tribes. While TEDNA recognizes this Subcommittee's long-standing commitment to funding TEDs, we would be remiss if we did not again point out that the \$2 million authorized in Section §2020 for TED funding through the BIE is more than 25 years old and in need of updating. If the authorization was simply adjusted for inflation, it would more than double. Accordingly, we view a \$5 million authorization as the minimum required to fulfill the intent of funding the important work of TEDs in Native American education. Further, while Section §2020 funding goes directly to TEDs, TEDNA (working closely with BIE) continues to play an important role in providing technical assistance to TEDs. TEDNA's role is one that this Subcommittee understands and has long-acknowledged, and we respectfully request that it be memorialized in the report issued by this Subcommittee.

### **REQUEST**

Sustained investment in TEDs is sound federal policy. It efficiently focuses and maximizes scarce resources for a historically underserved population. Direct Tribal involvement in education eliminates undue bureaucratic barriers and streamlines administration. It encourages and supports local control and tribal self-determination in education. Thus, this Subcommittee is presented with a unique opportunity to increase tribal involvement, leverage the expertise of TEDs, and provide support in furthering these goals to help generations of Native American students. The education of our people is a sovereign and fundamental right, as well as ~~and~~ a trust obligation. We must have control in shaping the experiences, outcomes, and planning of education that guides our people in their birthright as the leaders of our Tribes.

TEDNA respectfully requests \$5 million for TEDs in the Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill for Fiscal-Year 2019 to continue the vital work being done through the Section §2020 grant, SIE and other programs like Johnson O'Malley grants and increases for tribally controlled scholarships for post-secondary education. With these things in place, our Tribal nations can realize the promise of local control and quality education as embodied in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and by investing in TEDs we will see the benefits of meaningful Tribal Consultation realized, as required under Section 8538, for we are the best advocates for the benefit and success of our Native American students and the future of our Tribal Nations. Ts'ehdiyah, thank you.