



NATIONAL INDIAN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

## NIEA Resolution 2019 - #7

**TITLE: In Support of Bureau of Indian Education School Construction Funding Increases and Innovation**

**WHEREAS**, the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) was established in 1970 for the purpose of advocating, planning, and promoting the unique and special educational needs of American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; and

**WHEREAS**, NIEA as the largest national Native organization of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian educators, administrators, parents, and students in the United States, provides a forum to discuss and act upon issues affecting the education of Native people; and

**WHEREAS**, through its unique relationship with Native nations and tribes, the federal government has established programs and resources to meet the educational needs of American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians, residing on and off their reserved or non-reserved homelands; and

**WHEREAS**, the United States has a trust responsibility and is required to provide adequate funding to tribal nations for educational services to ensure the wellbeing of tribal citizens; and

**WHEREAS**, the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) oversees a total of 183 elementary, secondary, residential and peripheral dormitories across 23 states; and

**WHEREAS**, the Department of the Interior's Office of Inspector General published an evaluation in September 2016, titled "Condition of Indian School Facilities," that estimated the cost of fixing dilapidated BIE schools at more than \$430 million to fix the problems already identified at that time; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2019, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Management (DAS-M) in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs reported that according to Bureau of Indian Affairs data, the total amount of deferred maintenance in the BIE system had grown to \$725 million and the overall condition of education facilities was considered to be poor.

**WHEREAS**, in addition to the 17 schools on current lists for school and facilities replacement, 46 BIE schools qualify for replacement due the poor condition of education facilities and 14 qualify due to school age and proportion of students in portable classrooms, resulting in thousands of students being educated or housed in unsafe facilities; and

**WHEREAS**, tribal nations recognize the need for adequate school facilities for students in their communities and have been working with the Administration and Congress to discuss alternative school construction funding options under existing statutory authority; and

**WHEREAS**, the Gila River Indian Community in Arizona, working alongside Congress and the Department of the Interior, developed the first school construction/lease-back proposal whereby the Community designed and constructed a replacement BIE school and then leased the facility back to the Department of the Interior; and

**WHEREAS**, the Gila River Indian Community has proposed this model as a programmatic alternative to complement the current programs at the Department of the Interior and offer an innovative alternative to school construction in Indian Country that does not interfere with current programs or funding streams; and

**WHEREAS**, the Administration's FY 2020 budget request proposed to eliminate annual appropriations for school construction and would invest a maximum of \$65 million each year over a period of five years from federal energy development revenue into a Public Lands Infrastructure Fund for the purposes of funding BIE school construction, a significant reduction from the current \$238 million allocated through annual appropriations; and

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the National Indian Education Association calls upon Congress and the Administration to increase funding for BIE school infrastructure, construction, and repair; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NIEA calls upon Congress and the Administration to work with tribal nations to ensure avenues exist in which tribal schools are given access to adequate construction funding; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NIEA calls upon Congress and the Administration to work with tribal nations to develop additional innovative models of funding for BIE school construction and related infrastructure, provided that new funding sources or methods must supplement and not supplant existing funding methods; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that this resolution shall be the policy of NIEA until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

#### CERTIFICATION

I do hereby certify that the following resolution was duly considered and passed by the National Indian Education Association on October 12, 2019 at which a quorum of the membership was present.



Robin Butterfield  
President