



NATIONAL INDIAN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

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NIEA Resolution 2016- 05

TITLE: SUPPORTING NIHSDA'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE REAUTHORIZATION OF THE HEAD START ACT

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 Indian 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 Indian and Native people; and

WHEREAS, through its unique relationship with Indian 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 National Indian Head Start Directors Association (NIHSDA) has been the voice of American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start programs for over 35 years, and during that time NIHSDA has developed a wealth of knowledge regarding early childhood education in Indian Country, which it has used to prepare the following recommendations for the upcoming, and long overdue, Head Start Act reauthorization process; and

WHEREAS, the reauthorization legislation should preserve the federal-to-tribal relationship in fulfillment of the federal government's unique responsibility to Indian tribes and communities by maintaining current Indian Head Start provisions and ensuring that funds flow directly from the federal government to the tribes; and

WHEREAS, the unique nature of Indian Head Start programs should be honored through the integration of culturally and linguistically appropriate classroom practices, such as locally designed curricula, and the recognition of tribally-awarded teaching certifications for the purpose of satisfying staff degree requirements; and

WHEREAS, Congress should implement culturally appropriate evaluation tools to fairly assess the effectiveness of Indian Head Start programs, including reformation of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) review process and the incorporation of principles of traditional knowledge and culturally-derived research for the purposes of conducting studies and evaluations of Indian Head Start programs, which would allow for greater consideration of cultural and behavioral norms during the review process; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and its member agencies should remove use of the lowest 10% threshold requirement as a trigger for placing Head Start programs into the Designation Renewal System, and take appropriate action to amend the DRS regulations currently codified at 45 C.F.R. Part 1307; and

WHEREAS, eligibility requirements for Indian Head Start enrollment should be streamlined to provide a continuity of services from birth to five years old to ensure that all needy children have equitable access to educational and developmental services that would otherwise be unavailable in many tribal communities; and

WHEREAS, reauthorization language should include a revised funding mechanism that will deliver on Congress' promise to provide for special Indian Head Start expansion funds that are intended to redress the unseen losses in Indian Head Start enrollment that resulted from an earlier diversion of priority program funds; and

WHEREAS, the HHS documented the chronic shortage in adequate facilities for FY 2015 in its statutorily mandated report to Congress on the status of American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start Facilities, in which HHS reported that over a third of all Indian Head Start facilities suffer from mold, poor insulation, archaic electrical systems, and overall physical deterioration, among other conditions, which HHS stated is "likely contributing to other patter[n]s such as under enrollment, a higher cost per child, and issues AI/AN programs encounter when expanding services and partnering with child care providers"; and

WHEREAS, existing statutory restrictions on the purchase, construction, and renovation of suitable Head Start facilities should be loosened so that programs can address the chronic sub-standard conditions that plague their facilities and strengthen their capacity to provide the kinds of high-quality services that Native children, families, and communities rely on for early childhood development and success in later years.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that NIEA supports the preceding recommendations and resolves to work with NIHSDA on preparing for and educating federal officials about the upcoming Head Start Act reauthorization; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NIEA directs its Board of Directors and Executive Director to communicate this support to the Administration, the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, and the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee.

CERTIFICATION

I do hereby certify that the following resolution was dully considered and passed by the National Indian Education Association on October 7th, 2016 at which a quorum of the membership was present.



Patricia Whitefoot
President