



NATIONAL INDIAN EDUCATION
Advancing Excellence for All Native Students

May 10, 2016

The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman, Committee of Indian Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Support for Senator Barrasso's RYA 16392 for RAISE Act

Dear Chairman Barrasso,

On behalf of the National Indian Education Association (NIEA), the oldest and largest Native organization representing over 2,500 Native educators, students, teachers, parents, and tribal leaders, I am writing to express our support for [RYA 16392](#) to the Reforming American Indian Standards of Education (RAISE) Act of 2016. This substitute amendment makes key improvements to strengthen the RAISE Act, specifically:

1. Authorization levels which includes \$130,000,000 for school construction, maintenance, and repairs.
2. Inclusion of language that defines the purpose of the new Indian Education Agency.
3. Inclusion of language that would require the President to submit a budget request each fiscal year for school construction.

Chairman Barrasso, the resulting language will provide greater clarity to a continued investment in strengthening school systems for students attending Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) facilities. We thank you for incorporating NIEA's recommendation for the new Indian Education Agency to establish its own budget by adding language around authorized levels that reflect the need to best support the agency and the students it serves. Moreover, NIEA is pleased to see an emphasis on tribal consultation between the Department of Education and the Director, which will allow for greater transparency and coordination to move the current BIE reform forward.

In addition to the improvements that you have brought forward, NIEA appreciates you maintaining parts of the original language that makes this bill significant. This includes elevating the Director position from a career to Presidential appointee and for maintaining the Indian preference for the Director role.

NIEA thanks you for your leadership in helping Congress fulfill its federal trust responsibility by strengthening an agency that is required to provide a high quality education to American Indian and Alaska Native students. If there are any questions, please feel free to contact NIEA's Executive Director, Ahniwake Rose at arose@niea.org.

Thank you,

Patricia Whitefoot
President

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