The National Congress of American Indians
Resolution #ATL-14-081

TITLE: Honoring the Life and Legislative Recommendations of Kaagoowu, the Late Dr. William Demmert, by Supporting the Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act

WHEREAS, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

WHEREAS, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; 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 and Alaska Natives residing on and off their reserved or non-reserved homelands; and

WHEREAS, Kaagoowu was Tlingit and Oglala Lakota, received his Ph.D. in education from Harvard in 1973, and was a clan member of the Eagle Clan of the Tlingit. He was a lifelong champion of Native language and educational issues; and

WHEREAS, Kaagoowu was a founding member of the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) and contributed to NIEA through board participation, developing the artwork for the seal of NIEA and general Indian education policy advocacy; and

WHEREAS, Kaagoowu had collaborated with U.S. Senators Walter Mondale and Ted Kennedy as well as Dr. Will Antell NIEA President, when Kaagoowu was NIEA board secretary insuring that American Indians were actively involved in the legislative process to advance the historic 1972 Indian Education Act making Kaagoowu the first American Indian to develop a piece of federal Indian legislation; and

WHEREAS, Kaagoowu became in 1973 the first Deputy Commissioner of the U.S. Office of Indian Education in the United States Department of Health Education and Welfare and simultaneously served as the Director of the Office of Indian Education Programs in the Bureau of Indian Affairs Department of Interior; and
WHEREAS, Kaagoowu was the principal author of the groundbreaking Indian Nations At Risk Report and leader in organizing the White House Conference on Indian Education; and

WHEREAS, Kaagoowu received the prestigious NIEA Educator of the Year Award in 1977 and NIEA Life Time Achievement Award in 2004 and received the posthumous honor of NIEA naming its immersion recognition in his name will Demmert Cultural Freedom Award; and

WHEREAS, Kaagoowu authored many NIEA resolutions promoting immersion instruction and culturally based education including resolutions that support immersion funding in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; and

WHEREAS, Kaagoowu promoted to the NIEA board in 2008-2009 a legislative proposal to create a new Part D of Title VII that would support American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian immersion schools; and

WHEREAS, this legislative proposal became the basis for NIEA ESEA reauthorization recommendations addressing immersion provisions which were promoted in NIEA congressional testimony and briefing papers; and

WHEREAS, Senate Committee on Indian Affairs (SCIA) Chairman Jon Tester has introduced the Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act, S. 1948, and the SCIA has passed this legislation out of committee and hot lined the bill and Representatives Tom Cole and Betty McCollum have co-sponsored an identical companion bill H.R. 4214 in the U.S. House of Representatives; and

WHEREAS, the Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act would create a new grant program in Indian Education Title VII to support American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian immersion schools; and

WHEREAS, there is broad based support for this legislation including the following inter-tribal organizations: National Congress of American Indians, National Indian Education Association, the Alaska Federation of Natives, Great Plains Tribal Chairman’s Association, Coalition of Large Tribes, Montana Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council, Navajo Nation, Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council, Inc. Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes, Office of Hawaiian Affairs, United Tribes of Michigan, United South and Eastern Tribes, Affiliated Tribes Northwest Indians, and United Tribes of North Dakota representing over 2 million American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian citizens; and

WHEREAS, numerous Native language advocacy organizations and Indian education organizations have endorsed the Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the NCAI honors and recognizes the remarkable lifetime work, efforts, and accomplishments of Kaagoowu (Dr. William Demmert) and respectfully request that the Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act be renamed to include Dr. William Demmert’s name in the long title of the bill; and
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NCAI supports the Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act and directs the NIEA board and its Executive Director to pursue passage of this legislation in the 113th Congress and future congressional sessions until becomes law; and

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

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2014 Annual Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Hyatt Regency Atlanta, October 26-31, 2014 in Atlanta, Georgia, with a quorum present.

ATTEST:

[Signature]

President

[Signature]

Recording Secretary