



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #SPO-16-012

TITLE: Opposition to Voucher Programs in Bureau of Indian Education Schools

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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, Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) voucher programs, such as those operated in Arizona and Nevada, are similar to a checking account with up to 90% of the state funding that would have been received by the K-12 public school the student previously attended; and

WHEREAS, under this program, parents receive a debit card to cover the cost of multiple education expenses, including private school tuition, online school expenses, textbooks, and tutoring from public school funding; and

WHEREAS, if ESAs expanded to Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) students, up to 90% of the per-pupil-expenditure that BIE would spend on a BIE-funded school, could be used to pay for educational expenses at a private school; and

WHEREAS, despite the pressing need for funding parity and equitable access, historical funding trends illustrate that the federal government has been abandoning its trust responsibility by not fully funding BIE; and

WHEREAS, as written, there is no distinction between BIE operated and funded schools – so that critical funding may be repurposed from tribally controlled schools as well; and

WHEREAS, tribes have overwhelmingly advocated for a tribally driven education as the best framework for teaching Native students; and

WHEREAS, programs such as ESAs undermine a tribally driven education because they pull funding from these schools to cover other educational expenses that do not require consultation with tribes; and

WHEREAS, research shows the school performance of Native students, has improved when they receive a tribally driven education. With the increase of test scores and proficiency in an environment that is most natural to Native students, a continued investment in supporting community driven initiatives and schools is warranted; and

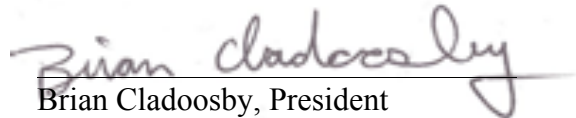
WHEREAS, despite many independent studies of voucher programs across the country, there is no clear evidence that vouchers improve educational outcomes for participants. Studies of districts throughout the country show no significant test score gains in school districts with voucher programs.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) reaffirms its commitment to a tribally controlled education and opposes voucher programs such as ESAs for students attending BIE funded schools as a mechanism to better support Native students; 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 2016 Midyear Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Spokane Convention Center, June 27 to June 30, 2016, with a quorum present.


Brian Cladoosby, President

ATTEST:


Aaron Payment, Recording Secretary