The National Indian Education Association (NIEA) is the nation's largest and most inclusive organization advocating for comprehensive culture-based educational opportunities for American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians.

Background
Safe and healthy classrooms that value Native cultures, languages, and histories are critical for Native students to learn and thrive. However, generations of Native students were removed from their families, experiencing the erasure of Native cultures through the American education system. Today, Native youth continue to experience the impacts of such federal policies through historical and childhood trauma.

National Landscape
Historical trauma manifests through nationwide performance metrics. Native students are disciplined and held back more frequently than their peers. Native youth also make up a disproportionate amount of those in juvenile facilities. These trends continue through graduation, as only 73 percent of Native students graduate from high school compared to the national average of 85 percent. These barriers have led to the lowest college participation rates in the nation, at 19 percent. From there, approximately 39 percent of Native students who enroll in a four-year, post-secondary institution graduate, the lowest rate of any group nationally.

NIEA Recommendations
Congressional action and support for trauma-informed education practices is critical to reversing centuries of federal policies that resulted in the genocide of Native cultures, traditions, and languages.

Congressional Oversight: Congress has a unique trust responsibility to Native students, rooted in the U.S. Constitution, treaties, and Supreme Court precedent. When evaluating federal performance and services through the oversight process, Congress has a unique opportunity to uphold federal promises by creating safe learning environments that support the holistic needs of each child.

• Recommendation: Ensure congressional oversight of the Department of Education and Bureau of Indian Education addressees’ historical trauma in schools to promote healing and create safe environments where students can thrive.
• Recommendation: Advance the Requirements, Expectations, and Standard Procedures for Effective Consultation with Tribes (RESPECT) Act, which codifies for the first time a requirement that federal agencies consult with tribal governments before taking or permitting actions that would significantly impact them (H.R. 3587)

Data Sovereignty and Accountability: Federal data systems fail to accurately represent Native students. Tribes, Native communities, and policymakers must have access to data that accurately and appropriately identifies Native students in federal data collections that support accountability.

• Recommendation: Strengthen the Civil Rights Data Collection and the Office of Civil Rights through legislation such as the Ending PUSHOUT Act (H.R. 5325).

Professional Development and Training: A healthy classroom requires culturally competent educators equipped to meet the unique needs of Native students. Students’ lives continue when they leave the classroom, and teachers must have the training to address historical and childhood trauma that may impact a student’s education. Native students must have access to educators that have the professional training and experience to create safe classrooms where our youth can thrive.

• Recommendation: Advance and pass legislation that provides professional development for educators in schools that serve Native students, including the Native Educator Support and Training Act (S.1161).