TITLE:  SUPPORT FEDERAL CHARTER SCHOOL POLICY FOR NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENTS

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 Native 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 Native 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, Native students, families, and communities continue to experience the devastating impacts and trauma of federally funded educational policies that were developed over 150 years ago, including individual loss of identity, low self-esteem, mental health and substance abuse issues, near destruction of extended family/kinship systems, loss of languages, loss of Tribal traditions and ceremonies, and weakened nations structure; and

WHEREAS, addressing the ongoing generational trauma caused by these education policies is a vital and necessary step to improving community, educational, and socio-economic outcomes for Native peoples; and

WHEREAS, to mitigate the impacts the boarding school policies had on tribes and Native American communities, specific federal policy that provides trauma informed and rigorously academic educational systems that promote and support Native languages, cultures, histories, and values for Native students should be developed; and

WHEREAS, there are 64 Charter schools serving Native students, independent and publicly funded, that have been developed and established by Tribes, teachers, parents, and community members partnering with official authorizers to create schools that address the unique needs of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian students; and

WHEREAS, a charter school is a “publicly accountable, autonomous school that may operate outside of a traditional public school district and functions as a school of choice” and currently, a state must have existing charter school legislation in order for a public charter school to be established; and
WHEREAS, forty-five states have passed charter school legislation and four of the remaining five states without state charter school laws have high Native American populations, and Native American communities in these states have expressed a strong desire to develop public charter schools for their students; and

WHEREAS, Native American charter schools will further strengthen educational and tribal sovereignty by providing tribes the opportunity to innovate and create education systems that serve and address the unique educational and cultural needs of their children and youth that are aligned with community values and priorities, including the ability to:

• Integrate Native languages, sovereignty, histories, and cultures into the curriculum;
• Provide place-based learning that is derived from the community's perspective and lived experiences throughout the entire learning process; and
• Application of Native thought and philosophy in order for Native students to be college, career, and community ready.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Indian Education Association supports legislative proposals that promote a federally funded tribal charter school demonstration project with the Department of Education that will provide Native American communities access to the tools and resources to expand high-quality, culturally relevant charter schools and programs in Native communities, absent state legislation and with the ability to receive direct federal funding.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the National Indian Education Association supports legislative proposals, including a tribal charter school demonstration project, that would require the Department of Education to work collaboratively with partners to fund tribal charter schools.

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

CERTIFICATION

I do hereby certify that the following resolution was dully considered and passed by the National Indian Education Association on [insert date] at which a quorum of the membership was present.

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Jason Dropik
President