



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #DEN-18-009

TITLE: In Support of Affirmative Action Policies and Against the Withdrawal of Guidance on Affirmative Action

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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 and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 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, the federal government's boarding school policy was designed to assimilate Native students, punish students for speaking their languages, and discourage Native spiritual beliefs – in short, designed to eliminate diversity; and

WHEREAS, by encouraging Native students to repress their culture and assimilate to Western ways of knowing, the Federal government's educational policy fostered a spirit of alienation amongst Native youth that has carried across generations and stifled academic achievement; and

WHEREAS, fewer American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian students matriculate to postsecondary institutions, where 21 percent of American Indian and Alaskan Native students and 26 percent of Native Hawaiian students are enrolled; and

WHEREAS, Native students experience lower rates of completion at postsecondary degree programs, where 41 percent of first-time, full time Native students who enrolled in a four-year public institution in 2008 completed a Bachelor's degree by 2014 compared to 60 percent in the general population; and

WHEREAS, the impacts of higher education enrollment, retention and graduation are directly related to the systemic policies of discrimination; and

WHEREAS, culture and diversity should be celebrated and not destroyed; and

WHEREAS, affirmative action policies at institutions of higher education celebrate the racial demographic diversity of America; and

WHEREAS, from 2009-2016, the Department of Education (Department) issued affirmative action guidance to universities, based on legal opinions from the federal courts, in recognition of the critical importance of supporting diversity in higher education; and

WHEREAS, in July 2018, the Department withdrew critical affirmative action guidance to postsecondary institutions; and

WHEREAS, the withdrawal of the affirmative action guidance did not change any law, but signaled to Native students, and other historically underrepresented groups, that diversity in higher education is not a priority; and

WHEREAS, the withdrawal of affirmative action guidance could allow universities to not recognize the importance of Native student enrollment, or exclude Native students altogether; and

WHEREAS, the withdrawal of affirmative action guidance to universities can hinder the academic success of Native students, impeding access to high wage/high demand jobs and inhibiting economic development in Native communities; and

WHEREAS, affirmative action policies have proven to be one of them most effective ways to create diverse, inclusive learning environments; and

WHEREAS, diverse and inclusive environments reduce prejudice and promote relationship building – creating more engaging learning environments for all students.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) urges the reinstatement of affirmative action guidelines; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI urges higher education institutions to continue to abide by the affirmative action guidelines and celebrates universities that have publicly declared continued support for affirmative action; and

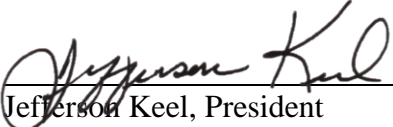
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, NCAI supports equity and diversity as a framework for state and national legislation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, NCAI will advocate for the development and implementation of programs that intentionally help identify, recruit, develop, and retain diverse student populations; 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 2018 Annual Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Hyatt Regency in Denver, Colorado October 21-26, 2018, with a quorum present.



Jefferson Keel, President

ATTEST:



Juana Majel Dixon, Recording Secretary