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June 12, 2024

Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the National Education Association's 3 million members and the 50 million students they teach and support in public schools and public colleges and universities, we appreciate the opportunity to offer comments for the Committee's markup of H.R. 7227, the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act, and H.J. Res. 165, pertaining to the Department of Education rule regarding nondiscrimination in education programs and activities receiving federal funding.

We urge you to vote YES on H.R. 7227 and NO on H.J. Res. 165. Votes related to these issues may be included in the NEA Report Card on the 118th Congress.

H.R. 7227, the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act

NEA members are grateful to the Committee for your leadership—especially significant when there is such division in our nation—in advancing H.R. 7227. The bill's bipartisan sponsorship signals that it is still possible for us to come together, regardless of political party, to illuminate historical wrongs.

The Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Board School Policies Act will shine a light on the impact of Indian boarding schools on the hundreds of thousands of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children who were taken from their families and Tribes from at least 1860 until 1978. The schools were not places of education; they were tools for colonization, assimilation, and genocide. Many children died, went missing, or were murdered while in the custody of the boarding schools, and those who survived were often the victims of physical, sexual, psychological, and spiritual abuse. The schools caused the loss of connection to language, culture, families, and Tribes.

H.R. 7227 would provide for a full inquiry into the policies of the boarding schools through locating church and government records, compiling evidence of the ongoing effects of intergenerational trauma, and collecting testimony from survivors and Tribes. Information resulting from the inquiry would be shared with the public within five years.

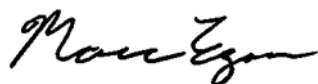
H.J. Res. 165, pertaining to the Department of Education rule regarding nondiscrimination in education programs and activities receiving federal funding:

H.J. Res. 165 would undo the recent Title IX rule protecting LGBTQI+ students, survivors of sexual violence or harassment, and students who are pregnant or parents. It must be rejected because it would undercut the U.S. Department of Education's recently finalized rule reinforcing and restoring Title IX's protections, which are meant to ensure that every student has the right to a safe and welcoming learning environment, free from sex discrimination.

The Department of Education updates clarify Title IX's protections against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, at a time when 83% of LGBTQI+ youth report in-school victimization, yet 62% of those who have been victimized never inform school staff of the incident. The Title IX updates will clarify remedies for students facing sex-based harassment, hold school officials accountable for fostering safer school environments, and ensure that LGBTQI+ youth can participate equally in educational opportunities, ranging from attending the restroom that corresponds with their gender identity, to going to prom with the person of their choice.

H.R. 7227 moves our nation forward on the path to healing and reconciliation, while H.J. Res. 165 pushes us backward in our ongoing work to protect the civil rights and safety of us all. Please vote YES on H.R. 7227 and NO on H.J. Res. 165.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marc Egan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association