

**Opening Statement of Ranking Member Alma Adams (NC-12)**

Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, and the  
Committee on Education and the Workforce, Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development  
Joint Subcommittee Hearing

*“Enhancing Educational Outcomes in Indian Country: Postsecondary Education at the Bureau of Indian  
Education”*

1324 Longworth House Office Building

Tuesday, June 24, 2025 | 10:30 a.m.

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would also like to thank Chairman Gosar and Ranking Member Dexter, as well as the witness, for being here today.

Last summer, we held a similar joint hearing regarding postsecondary education under the Bureau of Indian Education. That hearing primarily focused on Haskell University, and I am grateful for the opportunity to revisit that issue.

Let me begin by acknowledging the United States’ (US) shameful history of mistreating and forcibly assimilating Native people. Our country has spent many decades and worked across many Administrations in an attempt to rectify a fraction of these injustices and do what we can to improve the lives of Native people today by ensuring educational and economic opportunity in these communities.

Haskell Indian Nations University (Haskell) and Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI) represent, among other things, a promise on behalf of Congress to indigenous communities across the country. For example, through Title III of the *Higher Education Act of 1965*, Congress committed to supporting quality Tribal Colleges and Universities. These Tribal colleges were meant to be safe spaces for Native students to receive a quality, affordable education while embracing and uplifting their culture. That is a vision worth striving for, and that goal should be the focal point of our conversations today.

Unfortunately, the U.S. government has consistently fallen short of this goal and has never fully kept its promise to appropriately fund these schools. Over the years, these schools have gone neglected and underfunded. And one impact of this treatment has been the infrastructure challenges and maintenance backlogs these schools have experienced. Without additional resources, these schools cannot address issues facing their physical structures, such as leaky roofs, plumbing issues, electrical issues, and other infrastructure problems.

And unfortunately, these are not the only problems we have heard of. At Haskell University, we have heard of instances of abuse, corruption, and scandal, all of which limit students’ ability to learn safely and succeed.

Specifically, we’ve heard allegations of the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) itself failing to provide leadership, transparency, accountability, and management despite reports of a hostile campus environment rife with issues such as academic fraud, nepotism, and – tragically – in some cases, sexual misconduct and abuse. In fact, in May,

the Department of the Interior's Office of Inspector General found that a BIE employee sexually harassed student athletes on the women's basketball team.

The students and faculty of these schools deserve better, and the Native communities that they serve deserve to have the promise of opportunity fulfilled. The answer to these issues is not to abandon Haskell and its community.

It is critical that this school, along with SIPI and its students, get the support they need. And this includes providing support and funding so that they can live up to the standards that their communities deserve.

And this is why we need the Administration to take steps to help these schools. However, from what we've seen so far, they've done the opposite. In February, the Trump Administration fired a significant number of staff members from the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), some of them working at Haskell and SIPI, only to be forced to rehire them. Let me be clear: these firings accomplished nothing but to add instability and uncertainty at these schools. Further, the Administration's FY26 funding request did not indicate any intent to increase support at these schools through the Bureau of Indian Education's budget. In fact, the President's budget request was to cut the funding by almost 90 percent.

So, in light of all of this, at this hearing, I would like to hear how the Trump Administration plans to provide support for these institutions and to help make improvements where needed. Congress has a responsibility to ensure that the students at these schools receive a high-quality education in a safe environment that is conducive to celebrating and uplifting Native culture.

As a forty-year retired professor, I believe that student success is important. For far too long, the federal government has neglected that duty. It is time to right past wrongs and get these schools back on track for the sake of the next generation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.