



Representative Marcia L. Fudge
Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education
Subcommittee: *Examining the Challenges Facing American*
Indian Schools
April 22, 2015 at 10 a.m.

Good morning, and thank you Chairman Rokita for scheduling this hearing.

It has been more than seven years since this committee held a hearing on American Indian education. That is far too long. American Indian and Alaska Native students need and deserve better.

American Indian and Alaska Native students face daunting educational challenges- more than any population in this country. The condition of their facilities being only one of the many challenges they face. We also need to turn our attention to graduation rates.

In 2014 students attending Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools graduated at a rate of just 53 percent, while American Indian and Alaska Native students enrolled in non-BIE schools had a graduation rate of 68 percent, still well below the national average of 81 percent.

It is clear the federal government has failed to meet its obligation to deliver quality education services that meet all student needs in safe and healthy facilities. In BIE, tribally controlled and public schools much needs to be done! But today we will examine the condition of Bureau of Indian Education school buildings.

The poor condition of school buildings affects the health and safety of students, and fails to provide an environment conducive to learning.

In a February 2015 report, the Government Accountability Office outlines some of the challenges facing both the Department of Interior and the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) that affect the repair and maintenance of BIE schools.

GAO is here today. I look forward to hearing more about their findings, specifically what steps must be taken to address and prevent these issues going forward.

There must be collaboration among all entities with responsibility for the education of American Indian and Alaska Native students in order for them to achieve academic success.

While congressional oversight is required to ensure the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Education, and the Department of Education fulfill their obligations to American Indian and Alaska Native students, we know the long history of broken federal promises to our tribes and their children requires extra vigilance.

It is important for those responsible to know this is a priority and we are watching. The need is too urgent for us to do nothing.

To the witnesses, thank you for being here today. I look forward to hearing your testimony. I yield back.