

HB 85 // Yazzie Lawsuit Response Funding (Sponsor: Rep. Derrick Lente)

Meeting Native students' needs by expanding community-based education

Every child has the right to an education that enables them to succeed, yet too many schools are failing Native students. The *Yazzie/Martinez* court ruling found that the state has “not studied or developed effective educational systems for Native American students.” The pandemic has made this worse: Native students have been less engaged in learning and are more likely to suffer from considerable learning loss.

When schools fail to meet Native students' needs, tribal education leaders and communities must step in. Children must be able to turn to their communities for support in overcoming technological, transportation and cultural barriers to education.

HB 85 will make community-based education programs available to all Native students, from the youngest child immersed in their Native language to high schoolers catching up through out-of-school time learning. The bill will support tribal libraries to serve as community education hubs, offering educational programs in a nourishing, intergenerational setting that makes all learners feel welcome. The bill will also support Tribal Education Departments to develop community-based education plans and partner with school districts in the education of Native students.

“Tribal Libraries are at the heart of supporting our people, young and old, through our community-based education programs that strike a balance in the transfer of essential knowledge, Indigenous and Western. They are not a luxury but an absolute necessity.”

Janice Kowemy, Director, Laguna Public Library

HB 85 harnesses the unique knowledge and experience of tribal communities to make education more accessible and relevant for Native students.

HB 85 will give Native students the support they need to succeed. The bill will:

- Increase the capacity of Tribal Education Departments to design education programs and share responsibility for school governance and planning.
- Invest in tribal libraries to provide after-school and summer school programs, referrals to career and social support services, and technology access.
- Invest in community-based early childhood education that is culturally and linguistically relevant.
- Invest in Native language programs to preserve, sustain and revitalize Native languages.
- Develop an information technology plan that identifies solutions for Native students and their communities.

Investment: \$22.7 million

School districts should “[i]mprove collaboration with tribal communities by formalizing engagement opportunities beyond required consultations”

LFC Progress Report, January 2021