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TOM O'HALLERAN
1ST DISTRICT, ARIZONA

June 5, 2020

The Honorable Betsy DeVos
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202

The Honorable David Bernhardt
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary DeVos and Secretary Bernhardt,

I am writing to encourage you to disburse the funding provided to the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) in H.R. 748, the CARES Act, as soon as possible. As you know, the CARES Act provided \$69 million to tribally controlled schools, BIE controlled schools, and Tribal Colleges and Universities. Additionally, the CARES Act established the Education Stabilization Fund, which appropriated \$153.7 million to BIE funded programs through the Department of Education.

The CARES Act was passed over two months ago and consultation was conducted in April, despite a delay in the consultation effort by your agencies. Despite more than sufficient time, your agencies neither disbursed funding nor explained how and when the funding will be disbursed, leaving educators and students in an untenable situation.

Of the funding provided directly to the BIE in the CARES Act, \$46 million was provided directly to the BIE to prepare for and respond to the coronavirus, including distance learning curriculum and equipment. Similarly, the \$153.7 million provided through the Education Stabilization Fund is for coronavirus-related response and prevention. It is unacceptable that this funding has not yet been provided to schools. In some communities, summer school is underway – without coronavirus-related federal funding to support students who are currently distance learning. Without immediate funding, schools will not be able to begin to prepare for the fall coronavirus response.

I ask that you disburse these funds quickly to address the needs of students and educators in the BIE system. The coronavirus has been hard enough on Indian country, and students and educators should not have to worry about the funding that Congress appropriated and is intended to meet the country's treaty and trust obligations to Native American students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom O'Halleran".

Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress