

**HB 280 // American Indian Ed. Technical Assistance Centers****Sponsored by Rep. Derrick Lente**

*HB 280 will help schools and tribal education programs obtain guidance and technical assistance to better meet the needs of Native students.*

**Creating a support system for implementing the Indian Education Act**

New Mexico's Indian Education Act of 2003 boldly envisions an equitable, culturally relevant education for Native students. Yet schools and Tribes, teachers and administrators have nowhere to turn for help in making this vision a reality.

The *Yazzie/Martinez* court ruling found that the Public Education Department had not been able to provide technical assistance on Indian education. The Court attributed the continued failure to implement the Indian Education Act partly to this lack of assistance. While the Legislature had created Regional Education Cooperatives to support schools across the State, no specialized supportive infrastructure exists for Indian education.

The State has a duty to provide "sufficient technical assistance, guidance, monitoring and oversight on the implementation the New Mexico Indian Education Act."

*Yazzie/Martinez Court, 2018 Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, at ¶13071*

**HB 280 will create a support system for Indian education by establishing two Technical Assistance Centers.** These Centers will work with Tribes, school districts, schools, and educators to provide expertise, guidance, and hands-on support for better serving Native students.

The **Tribal Remedy Framework** has long recommended the creation of two Technical Assistance Centers led by Indigenous education experts: one to assist entities serving students from the Navajo Nation, Zuni Pueblo, and the Jicarilla Apache Nation, and another to assist entities serving Pueblo and Mescalero Apache students. This year, the Higher Education Department (HED) has come on board and worked with Representative Lente to introduce **HB 280**, which proposes to:

- Direct HED to establish two Technical Assistance Centers for Indian Education.
- Require HED to issue a request for proposals, with tribal input, for two Centers operating in geographically distinct regions of the State.
- Require HED to prioritize applications from tribal colleges and universities, from Native-led programs at New Mexico's public higher education institutions, and from tribally controlled entities.
- Task the Centers with assisting tribal education departments, partnering with state agencies, and collaborating with Native student-serving school districts to improve Native students' education.

*Appropriation:* \$2.25 million, included in the Higher Education Department's FY 24 budget.

**HB 280 is supported by the Governor of New Mexico and is the result of a collaboration between the Tribal Education Alliance and the Higher Education Department.**