



HB 138 // Funding for Tribal Departments of Education and Yazzie Lawsuit Responses

Representative Derrick Lente

When schools fail, tribal communities must respond to the needs of their children and families. Tribal education department staff understand the challenges their students face at school and at home, as well as the opportunities that exist or can be created to help them realize successful futures.

Based on that knowledge and experience, tribal education directors are uniquely positioned to assist tribal communities, public schools, parents, and students to develop tribal education blueprints and government-to-government protocols, as well as coordinate the implementation of such tribal education strategic plans and protocols.

Without funding, tribal education departments will become the weakest link in the educational system that already struggles to provide equitable and quality education to students most at-risk: Native children.

Early childhood education is a priority for the State and significant monetary investments have been made to create a comprehensive early education plan for New Mexico children from birth to age 5. Unfortunately, the needs of Native children and families have not received adequate attention.

Funding for tribal libraries and tribal education departments to develop their respective early childhood strategic plans is necessary so that Native children can strive and succeed. Without resources for tribal strategic planning, the State's early childhood framework may lead to unintended consequences. As an example, the federal Head Start program did not include tribal input in the development of policies and curriculum design that resulted in a complete disregard of native languages and culture.

It took many years of lobbying by tribal leaders to shift Head Start policy and change federal law to make native language preservation a priority and responsibility of Head Start within tribal communities.

HB 138 will fund:

- Tribal libraries to staff and develop community-based afterschool and summer school programs.
- Development and implementation of education blueprints and governance structures.
- Development of early childhood CLR curriculum and assessment tools; a needs assessment of early childhood education facilities and construction.
- Development and staffing of tribal technology departments to provide network support and access to high-speed internet; provide IT scholarships to Native American students.

* **Appropriation: \$16.2 million**

