

HB 86 // Native American Library, Internet & Education (Sponsor: Rep. Lente)**Strengthening community-based education infrastructure**

Tribal communities offer an abundance of educational opportunities that help Native students learn and thrive. Yet tribal libraries are crumbling, technology is lagging behind and the digital divide is growing.

HB 86 invests in critical education infrastructure to support Native students' access to education. It will enable each of New Mexico's 23 Nations, Tribes and Pueblos to plan, design, construct and equip facilities and networks that serve Native students.

This will increase Indigenous education sovereignty, recognizing that tribal communities have a right to shape their children's education. Native students' benefit from enriched learning in their own communities, embedded in their culture, using the language of their ancestors.

The urgent need for strengthening tribal education infrastructure has been confirmed by the court ruling in *Yazzie/Martinez*, New Mexico's Indian Education Act, and many years of assessment and planning by tribal educators. Based on this information, HB 86 selects specific capital investments that will yield substantial returns for Native students.

"The strength of our people and our sovereign nation is dependent upon the education of our children in carrying forward the knowledge of our ancestors' gift to us and at the same time acquiring the skills necessary to protect our lands, our way of life, our people, all that defines who we are. Education sovereignty is the right to fulfill that vision without compromise."

President Gabe Aguilar, Mescalero Apache Tribe

The library in the Pueblo of Acoma, the Acoma Learning Center, is housed in a triple-wide modular building intended for temporary use. Its popular programs include after-school tutoring, summer reading, language immersion and an agricultural class. Detailed blueprints for a new construction are in place, but there is no funding. HB 86 allocates \$4.5 million.

HB 86 will:

- Rebuild or renovate tribal libraries to serve as community education hubs.
- Invest in community-based early childhood care and training centers.
- Invest in Indigenous curriculum and materials development centers to drive the production of culturally and linguistically relevant education plans and materials.
- Invest in integrated technology networks that connect tribal education entities, students, their families and their communities.

Investment: \$94,782,942 (one-time capital investment), including \$66,682,942 for libraries in each Pueblo, Nation and Tribe, and \$11,100,00 for technology networks.