

FAITH ACTION NETWORK

A Partnership for the Common Good

June 7, 2022

Dear House Natural Resource Committee members,

We are writing to express our full support for H.R. 5444 - Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act. As a multi-faith organization working across Washington State, we represent more than 164 faith communities and thousands of individual advocates of faith and conscience. Together we call upon the House of Representatives to take action on H.R. 5444.

Faith Action Network facilitates an **Interfaith Network with Indigenous Communities (INIC)** that seeks to address the harm caused by faith communities involved in our nation's tragic history of Native American Boarding Schools. We recognize the history of the United States is marked with Christian-based denominations' complicity in the cultural genocide of indigenous people. While these atrocities are making headlines now, tribal communities have been testifying for decades of the forced removal, assimilation, abuse, and death perpetrated through these boarding schools.

As people of faith, we know that our complicity and lament must lead to action. **[INIC issued the statement linked here](#)**, signed by over 160 faith leaders and organizations including Pacific Northwest bishops, calling for a truth-telling and healing process and endorsing Secretary Deb Haaland's investigation. Moving H.R. 5444 forward is a critical step in the process of addressing this injustice.

We support the ways H.R. 5444 will bring together a commission to investigate the lasting and ongoing effects of these boarding schools, and make recommendations to:

- **Discontinue the removal of indigenous children** from their families and tribal communities by state social service departments, foster care, and adoption agencies.
- **Protect unmarked graves** and accompanying land protections.
- **Support repatriation** and identify the tribal communities from which children were taken.
- **Include subpoena power in the bill** to ensure accountability and sharing of church records.

Passing H.R. 5444 is a critical step towards doing what is right. Faith Action Network, faith leaders, multi-faith communities, and advocates of faith and conscience across Washington urge you to take action.

Please contact us if we can be of any assistance in speaking with our WA Congressional delegation.

Sincerely,



Elise DeGooyer
Executive Director, Faith Action Network