

Hon. Sara C. Bronin
Chair

Jordan E. Tannenbaum
Vice Chairman

Reid J. Nelson
Executive Director



December 5, 2023

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
Capitol Building, S-221
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
Capitol Building, S-230
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Brian E. Schatz
Chair, Senate Committee on Indian Affairs
Hart Senate Office Building, SH-838
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa A. Murkowski
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Indian Affairs
Hart Senate Office Building, SH-838
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Chair Schatz, and Ranking Member Murkowski:

I am writing to express the support of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) for S. 1723, the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act. Established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the ACHP is the independent federal agency charged with advising the President and Congress on matters relating to historic preservation.

From 1819 to 1969, many American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children were removed from their homes and sent to Indian Boarding Schools that were directly or indirectly supported by the federal government. Forced assimilation practices at the schools resulted in intergenerational trauma and cultural disconnection. An unknown number of children died at the schools, and in some cases their burial sites remain unknown. The ACHP supports creation of a commission to investigate and report on the legacy of Indian Boarding Schools; to make recommendations on federal action in the light of the findings; and to promote healing for Indian Boarding School survivors and their communities.

The ACHP strongly supports the provisions of S. 1723 that address the memorialization and preservation of burials associated with the schools. In March 2023, the ACHP adopted its [Policy Statement on Burial Sites, Human Remains, and Funerary Objects](#). This policy statement establishes a set of standards and guidelines that federal and state agencies, and other relevant entities should, at a minimum, seek to implement in order to provide burial sites, human remains, and funerary objects the consideration and protection they deserve. The ACHP issued [companion guidance](#) to the policy statement in June 2023. The ACHP urges that reference to this policy statement and guidance be included in the bill and would be happy to suggest relevant draft legislative language.

The ACHP welcomes inclusion of the ACHP on the proposed Federal Truth and Healing Advisory Committee at the Department of the Interior. We do request, however, that the bill be revised to provide for the ACHP chairman rather than the executive director to serve on the committee. The chairman would be in a position to name the ACHP's Presidentially appointed Tribal/Native Hawaiian member to serve as

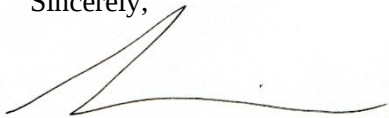
ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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her/his designee. (We do not recommend naming the Tribal/Native Hawaiian member to the committee directly since, unlike in the case of the ACHP chairman, there is no legal provision for someone to serve in an acting capacity in the event of a Tribal/Native Hawaiian member vacancy.)

The ACHP reaffirms its commitment to American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian people through our support of this proposed law, which would recognize the intergenerational trauma experienced by too many and would help us move toward healing. I hope our recommended revisions to the bill in reference to the ACHP's policy statement on burials and ACHP participation on the Federal Truth and Healing Advisory Committee will be affirmatively considered. Please feel free to contact me if the ACHP can be of any assistance during further consideration of the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act. In addition, your staff may wish to follow up with ACHP Executive Director Reid Nelson at rmelson@achp.gov. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sara C. Bronin', with a stylized, sweeping flourish at the end.

Sara C. Bronin
Chair

cc: The Honorable Elizabeth Ann Warren
Energy and Natural Resources Committee