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RANKING MEMBER

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD, ELEMENTARY, AND
SECONDARY EDUCATION

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May 3, 2024

The Honorable Andy Harris
Chairman
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug Administration

The Honorable Sanford Bishop Jr.
Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug Administration

Dear Chairman Harris and Ranking Member Bishop,

I am requesting \$792,156 under the FY 25 Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Community Facilities Grants program for Pascua Yaqui Tribe Modular Classrooms Construction.

This funding request will enable the Pascua Yaqui Tribe (PYT) to initiate the return of its youth onto tribal grounds (from their current public education provider, Tucson Unified School District) for language, culture, and traditional immersive pedagogical education. Funds will be used to purchase Modular Buildings which will facilitate the beginning of the return of the Pascua Yaqui education system. Because PYT is located within the Black Wash, a FEMA-recognized flood zone, the previous education building flooded and shortly thereafter, developed toxic black mold, causing the building to be condemned, which necessitated children being transferred off the Reservation to Tucson Unified School District.

There are numerous scholarly articles about the importance and benefits of indigenous children receiving their education from indigenous school environments, which focus beyond standardized test scores to the importance of heritage, language, culture, tribal traditions to traditional food sources and traditional food preparations. In public schools, these important psychological components of self-identification and cultural belonging are completely eradicated, often resulting in conflicts of identity duality that has been proven harmful, while simultaneously being victimized by public school “bullies” because their tribal “ways” are different. The historical harms are well-documented and speak volumes against indigenous learners placed in public school environments, pointing to the salient importance of returning them to their own customs and teachings post-haste.

To that end, the education department has crafted a curriculum crosswalk that aligns Yaqui lifeways with the academic standards for K-2, which will ensure academic readiness and cultural implementation. In addition, a team of educators has created companion curricula for an existing popular curriculum that includes indigenous stories, essential content vocabulary, and sentence dialogues. A cohort of credentialed Yaqui teachers are ready to educate youth in language,

culture, and traditions alongside Arizona Common Core Standards – education standards used to ensure all children receive a good education, even if they change schools or move to a different state.

The Pascua Yaqui Tribe will purchase and install two 60 x 24-foot modular buildings and a toilet trailer building. The two modular buildings house two classrooms in each, for a total of four classrooms which PYT will instruct 20 students within each classroom. The toilet trailer houses dual-gender restrooms of three stalls and an ADA-compliant stall on each gendered side of the trailer. All three buildings will also have ADA-compliant rampways to the entry doors, as well as skirting for climate and pest control purposes. With the requested funds, the Tribe will also purchase classroom technology, staff workstations, and playground equipment.

The total cost of the project is \$1,056,208 and the federal request is \$792,156. The budget breakdown for the cost estimate is as follows:

- \$627,256.36 (\$313,628.18 per modular) for the two-classroom modular, including delivery, set-up, installation, and State tax
- \$256,163.90 for the toilet trailer, including delivery, installation, and State tax
- \$94,596.00 for classroom technology, including tablets for each student, teacher desktop computers, teacher laptops, large screen smart TV monitor with touch screen capability, printers,
- \$28,192.00 for staff workstations, waiting area chairs, fire resistant filing cabinets
- \$50,000 for playground equipment

This is an important launch for returning PYT's youth onto tribal lands for educational preservation of language, culture and traditions, important legacy aspects of their entire lives that traditional off-reservation public school curricula do not address. This project meets all requirements, is shovel ready, and can obligate funds within a year.

Thank you for your consideration of this important proposal.

Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress