

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

February 3, 2016

The Honorable Shaun Donovan
Director
Office of Management and Budget
Executive Office of the President
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Director Donovan:

We are writing to urge you to strongly consider the state of schools funded by the Department of Interior's Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) when formulating your FY2017 budget proposal. The substandard conditions at these schools – including in our state of Minnesota – are not conducive to educational achievement, and they unfairly restrict learning opportunities for the Native youth attending these schools. Therefore, the FY2017 budget should provide strong funding to construct and repair these schools, and include a comprehensive, long-term plan for the repair and replace of all substandard BIE facilities.

We have seen the deplorable conditions of these schools first hand in our state. The Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig School in Minnesota is in dire need of replacement. The facility, which was originally built for use as a bus garage, has serious structural and mechanical deficiencies and lacks proper insulation. It does not meet safety, fire, and security standards due to the flimsiness of the construction materials, electrical problems, and lack of alarm systems. In addition, the building lacks a communication intercom system and telecommunications technology. The building is also plagued with poor indoor air quality due to mold, fungus, and a faulty HVAC system and suffers from rodent infestation, roof leaks, uneven floors, poor lighting, sewer problems, lack of handicap access, and lack of classroom and other space. These are just a few of the facility's numerous deficiencies. This school building poses a genuine threat to the health and safety of the students attending the school. It is not a setting for students to learn and thrive.

As you know, the education of the students at BIE-funded schools is a trust responsibility of the United States, and ensuring adequate educational facilities is part of this responsibility. Addressing the critical health and safety hazards that exist at individual BIE facilities across the nation must be a central part of the BIE plan to construct and maintain safe schools for all of its students. We therefore respectfully request that you provide strong funding for education construction within the "Replacement Facility Construction" line item in the Administration's FY2017 budget proposal for the BIE to meaningfully address this issue.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

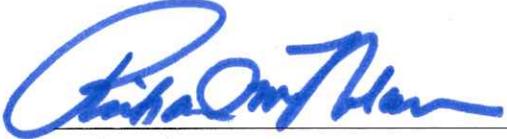
Sincerely,



Al Franken
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



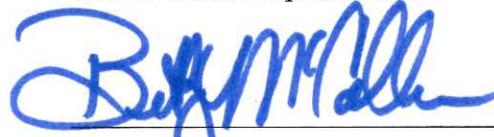
Rick Nolan
United States Representative



Timothy J. Walz
United States Representative



Keith Ellison
United States Representative



Betty McCollum
United States Representative



Collin C. Peterson
United States Representative



Erik Paulsen
United States Representative

CC: Secretary Sally Jewell