

May 10, 2022

Dear Members of Congress:

We are members of the Greater Wichita, Kansas community and belong to a local advocacy group associated with the Friends Committee on National Legislation.

We support the bipartisan Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies in the United States Act (S. 2907/H.R. 5444), which would establish the first formal commission in U.S. history to investigate and document the policies and practices of 367 federally sponsored, faith-run institutions from the 1860s through the 1960s. This includes assimilation practices, attempted termination of cultures and languages of Indigenous peoples, and human rights violations.

It is time for the United States to acknowledge and investigate the historic trauma caused by the forced removal and relocation of Native American children to boarding schools. Quakers were among the strongest supporters of the Indian boarding school policy and operated some 30 Indian boarding schools (some in collaboration with the federal government) for varying lengths of time. Haskell Indian Nations University, based in Lawrence, Kansas, was founded in 1884 as a residential school for Indigenous children. It has now evolved into a federally operated tribal university.

Today, visitors to Haskell can view a jail and a cemetery with over 100 graves of children, a somber reminder of the trauma inflicted on Native American families in the area.

Although the trauma cannot be undone, we can start the work of revealing the truth, with the goal of healing and reconciliation with the people of tribal nations.

Please support this act and show Indigenous peoples in the United States that the federal government recognizes how colonization has affected, and continues to affect, their communities and culture.

Ignorance is no longer an excuse. It is the responsibility of the federal government to uncover the harrowing truths and work toward healing.

Sincerely,

Susie Ternes, Wichita, KS
Patrice Stephenson, Goddard, KS
Dorlan Bales, Wichita, KS