

Rochester MN Friends (Quaker) Meeting supports passage of the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding Schools in the United States Act (S. 2907/H. R. 5444)

As we become aware of the past and ongoing harm caused by Indian boarding schools to Indigenous individuals, communities, and entire Indigenous nations, we acknowledge the grave moral wrong committed by the United States government and collaborating American religious groups, including Quakers.

The bill will set up a Truth and Healing Commission to address the historical trauma experienced by Indigenous children in what is now the United States who were forcibly removed from their homes between 1869 and the 1960s and placed in Indian boarding schools. The children were forcibly dispossessed of their Indigenous languages, cultures, and spiritual practices and required to participate in Euro-American culture. Large numbers of children died and were buried at the schools. Indigenous peoples continue to suffer multigenerational trauma caused by this policy of forced assimilation and cultural genocide.

We support the commission's purpose to assess not only the past harms but the current impacts of Indian boarding school policies on Indigenous peoples, and to propose remedies and funding to address these harms. We note the leading roles of indigenous people in the development of this legislation. Further, we note that the last generation directly affected by the boarding schools are passing from the scene, so the opportunity to hear from them may be lost without prompt action.

We believe that the proposed commission is a strong step toward addressing more than 500 years of genocide, colonization, and forced assimilation of Native peoples on our continent. It is part of the work necessary to build relationships among Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities based on truth, respect, justice, and our shared humanity. We hope that the work of reconciliation will begin in earnest under this Truth & Healing Commission.

We are aware of the involvement of Quakers in these Boarding Schools and deeply regret our complicity and apologize for Quaker involvement. Apology alone is not enough and this commission would be a step toward healing.

We thank Senators Klobuchar and Smith for already co-sponsoring this Act and urge Rep. Finstad to also become a co-sponsor. We urge all our members of congress to make public statements supporting this legislation.