

**Statement Supporting the  
Native American Social Work Studies Institute  
Advisory/Development Committee  
July 3, 2018**

Good afternoon Chairwoman Louis and Committee Members:

Dr. Blanchard has presented on the importance of establishing the Native American Social Work Studies at New Mexico Highlands University. I will address the dire need for individuals pursuing a social work degree to also become educated on Native American Social Work.

The establishment of a Native American Social Work Studies at New Mexico Highlands University will train both American Indians and non-Indians interested in working with tribes on the social, behavioral and mental health issues of American Indians. In conjunction with the social work principals, students will learn about the historical and current events that affect American Indians. Additionally, the curriculum will include education on the cultural beliefs and values of American Indians that impact their response to social services. Techniques on working with American Indians will also be an important aspect to the Native American Social Work Studies curriculum.

The New Mexico Highlands University is well suited for the Native American Social Work Studies program as the University has the capacity to offer this curriculum to undergraduate and graduate students on the main campus, off campus sites and through on-line learning. This affords access to many tribal workers interested in pursuing a social work degree with an emphasis on Native American Social Work. Presently, New Mexico Highlands University has the largest number of Native American students pursuing a degree in social work in the State of New Mexico. Additionally, students educated on Native American Social Work will provide well-trained and qualified individuals available to work for tribes and increase the quality of social work practice in the State of New Mexico. An additional benefit will be for the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department who will benefit from trained graduates in Native American social work practice.

The tribes in New Mexico (Apaches, Navajo, and Pueblos) are challenged with the same social and health issues as the rest of our Nation. An area of great concern is child welfare. Presently, the majority of tribes in New Mexico do not have licensed social workers serving their communities. Existing tribal personnel are dedicated, yet express the need for university courses that will enhance their knowledge of social work practice. Some tribes have licensed social workers who diligently work with the New Mexico Indian Child Welfare Consortium to develop child welfare policies which tribe may adopt and incorporate into the tribe's social work programs. Additionally, the Consortium in collaboration with the NM Children, Youth and Families Department, Casey Foundation, the National Indian Child Welfare Association and other collaborators, provide training for all the tribal child welfare workers. Unfortunately, this effort needs support by establishing a university degree curriculum that offers education on Native American Social Work.

The Native American Social Work Studies Institute Advisory/Development Committee request of the support and endorsement of the Interim Indian Affairs Committee to introduce a bill in the upcoming 2019 Legislative Session to establish the Native American Social Work Studies Institute within the Facundo Valdez School of Social Work, New Mexico Highlands University. Thank you for allowing us to present before your committee and solicit your support for establishment of a Native American Social Work Studies Institute at New Mexico Highlands University.

Respectfully submitted:

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Pueblo of Pojoaque

Director, Family and Children's Services Department

Form Governor and Lifetime Council Member of the Pueblo of Pojoaque