

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION

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JOINT TRIBAL CONSULTATION LISTENING SESSION

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TUESDAY
APRIL 28, 2020

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The Listening Session convened via teleconference at 9:00 a.m. PDT, Ron Lessard, Acting Executive Director, White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education, presiding.

PRESENT

RON LESSARD, Acting Executive Director, White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education

TONY DEARMAN, Director, Bureau of Indian Education

RUTH RYDER, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education; Acting Director, Office of Indian Education

ROBERT SALLEY, Program Officer, Bureau of Indian Education

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P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

9:00 a.m.

MR. LESSARD: Hello, everyone, and welcome to today's listening session with the Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Education.

Thank you for joining us. My name is Ron Lessard. I am Mohawk, and I serve as the Acting Executive Director of the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education at the Department of Education.

I am extending a warm welcome to all tribal leaders and other stakeholders participating today.

The U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Education, share a joint commitment to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for all American Indian and Alaska Native youth.

Today's listening session is held in coordination with the White House Initiative on

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American Indian and Alaska Native Education.

Next slide, please. I am providing a few logistical notes regarding virtual participation and engagement today. This listening session is being recorded and transcribed for the record.

Tribal leaders and all participants will be given the opportunity to present remarks and comments following the presentation of the topics.

Only comments presented orally or submitted in writing to listeningssession@ed.gov can be entered into the record. Unfortunately, comments submitted by chat box cannot be entered into the record.

Given we have over 500 participants in our listening session, we will try to accommodate as many oral comments as we can today and we ask that you limit your comments to two to three minutes. We will have an identical session on Thursday, April 30th, from 12:00 to 2:00 Eastern

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time.

I wanted to give you a few up front notes on how to prepare to participate during the comment period. We ask that you log into the meeting room using the link provided to you in the announcement. Then please have the system call you by entering your number. This allows us to identify you for participation.

If you do not plan to verbally comment, please stay in listening only mode.

If your phone is connected -- if your phone is disconnected at any time or if you need to be connected, simply click the phone icon in toolbar and follow the prompts from there.

Next slide, please.

So today's agenda, we have our welcome logistics and introductions. We do an overview of topics and we have tribal leaders and a public comment period, and then we will have our closing.

Next slide, please.

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I would like to introduce Tony Dearman, Director of the Bureau of Indian Education, Ruth Ryder, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and Acting Director of the Office of Indian Education, and Robert Salley, who serves as the Program Officer for BIE in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education.

I would also like to acknowledge that we have staff from the Department of ED and BIE present on the line today.

I am turning it now over to Tony Dearman for a few opening remarks. Thank you.

MR. DEARMAN: Hello, tribal leaders and stakeholders. I want to thank each and every one of you for taking the time to participate in today's listening session.

And thank you to the Department of Education and the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education for co-hosting the listening session.

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I would also like to express my gratitude to all of you for the support, dedication, and commitment that you have displayed for our communities and students during this extremely difficult time.

Your dedication to our communities is apparent in your collaboration, patience, and flexibility over the past several weeks.

I look forward to your participation and input and to the important needs of our students and schools during this crisis, and how we prioritize the CARES Act funding from the Department of Education.

The current pandemic has challenged our schools and communities on a scale we have never before experienced. There may be more challenges ahead, but I am confident that with this continued collaboration we will be able to serve all communities and students, going forward.

Thank you again for your thoughtful

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contributions and time.

MR. LESSARD: Thank you, Tony. Thank you very much.

Right now I'd like to turn it over to Ruth Ryder for a few opening remarks.

MS. RYDER: Thank you, Ron, and thank you, Tony, for that thoughtful introduction. I would also like to welcome tribal leaders and stakeholders to our call today and thank you so much for joining us.

And we do want to apologize for any inconvenience that you may have experienced on Friday, and we are glad that you rejoined us today to participate in our listening session.

Next slide, please.

I'd like to start by doing a brief overview of the CARES Act to set the context for our conversation today. The Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security Act, or CARES Act, was signed into law by President Trump on March 27th, 2020. This program provides for \$2

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trillion in assistance, and \$330.75 billion in funding came to the Department of Education under the Education Stabilization Fund.

In addition to set asides for BIE and the outlying areas, the CARES Act created four grant programs under the ED Stabilization Fund.

The Education Stabilization Discretionary Grant Fund provides \$307.5 million and the information related to that program was released from the department yesterday.

The Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund, or the GEER Fund, provides approximately \$3 billion and this is an extraordinarily flexible emergency block grant that empowers governors to decide how best to meet the current needs of students, schools, including charter schools and nonpublic schools, post-secondary institutions and other education-related organizations and states so that faculty continue to teach and students continue to learn, and the application for these funds was released

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on April 14th.

The Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund, or the ESSER Fund, sets aside approximately \$13.2 billion and the department will award these grants to state education agencies for the purpose of providing local education agencies, including charter schools that are LEAs, with emergency relief funds to address the impact that COVID-19 has had, and continues to have, on elementary and secondary schools across the nation.

At a time when so many school boards and superintendents have closed campuses for the balance of the school year, it's important to think creatively about new service delivery methods and focus on investing in technology infrastructure and professional development and training that will help all students continue to learn through some form of remote learning. And the application for these funds was released on April 23rd.

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And finally, the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund, which provides \$13.9 billion for post-secondary education.

Next slide, please.

I'd like to provide you a quick overview of the distribution of the CARES funds, and you can see on the slide the total Education Stabilization Fund is \$13.75 billion.

Of that, there is one half of one percent set aside to the outlying areas. The outlying areas are Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of Northern Marianas, and the Virgin Islands, and also one half of one percent set-aside for BIE, and these set-asides are each approximately \$153 million.

Under the ESSER Fund, school districts can use the funds for any purpose under an ESEA program, such as Title I, if they choose. But they have a broad list of authorized activities in the CARES Act statute, which includes using funds for IDEA, for Perkins Career and Technical

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Ed, for the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, and the use of those funds will be a decision that will be made by SEA.

Next slide, please.

As I noted, the Education Stabilization Fund reserves, off the top, one half of one percent of funds for BIE. So that's off the top of the \$30.75 billion.

In other words, they are in addition to the four funds I mentioned above and this is equal to \$153 million, as I stated on the previous slide. Those funds are appropriated to the Department of Education, and Education will transfer those funds to the BIE.

The CARES Act legislation also provides \$69 million in supplemental funding for education-related needs that go to BIE through the Department of the Interior, and of that funding that goes to BIE through Interior, \$20 million is specifically slated for tribal colleges and universities.

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Today's listening session, I want to note, will focus on the \$153 million in funds that the Department of Education has offered to transfer from ED to BIE.

Next slide, please.

After considering the input received from today's listening session and the written comment period, this will inform the final terms that the two agencies will reach on the funds that ED will be transferring to the BIE.

ED will then be working diligently to transfer the funds to BIE as soon as possible.

At this point I am going to turn the presentation back over to Ron.

MR. LESSARD: Thank you, Ruth. Thank you very much for that explanation.

Next slide, please.

So now I'd like to go over the topics that we will be discussing today, focusing on the \$153 million that will flow to BIE from ED through the Educational Stabilization Fund, the needs of

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BIE-funded schools and their students as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, the types of current physical and mental health needs of students at BIE-funded schools due to the COVID-19 crisis.

I'd like to remind everyone that the topics were sent out with the announcement. These topics will be available on screen once the public comment period of today's presentation begins.

Next slide, please.

The best possibility is to prioritize new CARES Act funding that BIE receive from ED, such as internet connectivity for students, teachers, and schools, support the distance learning activities, educational technology for students and teachers including technology to support accessibility for children with disabilities, teachers, school leaders, salaries and others. Please note this question involves possible options listed in the -- these are the possible options listed in the law.

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Next slide, please.

The allocation of the ED CARES Act funds from ED be allocated for K through 12 BIE-funded schools only, versus split between tribal colleges and universities, K through 12 BIE-funded schools, and note that TCUs have a specific set-aside of \$20 million from the Interior appropriation of the CARES Act.

Next slide, please.

But before we begin our listening session today, we want to point participants to our resource slide, where we invite you to submit written comments through May 1st, 2020, at listeningession@ed.gov.

We also invite participants to read more about the Education Stabilization Fund, and we are providing contact information for our staff with further questions.

Next slide, please.

So right now, I'd like to turn it over to Robert Salley to lead us through the tribal

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leader and public comment period. Thank you.

MR. SALLEY: Great. Thank you so much, Ron.

As Ron said earlier, in order to participate in today's session you must be logged into the meeting room using the link provided to you. Then, please have the system call you by entering your number; this allows us to identify you for participation. When you are ready to provide a comment, you will need to raise your hand by selecting the person icon on the toolbar at the top of the screen.

Each person will be selected and unmuted one-by-one. Your name will be announced when your line has been unmuted. Once the listening session begins, comments will be received first from tribal leaders. Second, comments will be received from the public.

When speaking, we ask that all participants please state your first and last name along with your title affiliation, or your

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organization and your title, before delivering your comments.

We ask that participants please limit comments to the listening session topics and provide comments no longer than two or three minutes so that we can accommodate as many participants as possible in today's listening session.

We ask that you please remain in listen-only mode if you do not plan on providing a comment for today.

Great. So we are going to get started with inviting, first, our tribal leaders. If there are any tribal leaders on today's call, please raise your hands by using the raise your hand icon and we will get started.

THE OPERATOR: Hello, Robert. At this time, Joe Garcia's line has been unmuted to provide a comment.

MR. SALLEY: Thank you, Mardella.

Joe, we welcome you to provide your

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initial comments today.

And, Joe, if you're on mute we are not able to hear you in the audio.

THE OPERATOR: Joe, if you access the audio using your computer you may need to make sure that the microphone on your computer is unmuted as well.

MR. SALLEY: For now, why don't we go ahead and move past Joe and invite any additional tribal leaders on the line. We will circle back with Joe later in the presentation.

MR. GARCIA: Hi. Can you hear me now?

THE OPERATOR: Yes, sir.

MR. SALLEY: We can.

MR. GARCIA: Okay. Sorry about the delay here.

Okay. I am going to start. I am Joe Garcia and I am head councilman at Ohkay Owingeh. I am also a former president of NCAI, former chairman of the All Indian Pueblo Council, and currently a trustee at the Santa Fe Indian

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School, as well as a trustee at Bacone College.

Anyway, the things I'd like to suggest that be logged down, number one is that when you talk about BIE funding, please make sure that it does actually go through BIE and not BIA.

The second thing about the BIE-related funding is that there's a number of schools that are PL 100-297, tribal-controlled schools and, as such, we do have contracts and we do have the paperwork on how the funding goes directly to the tribe or to the institution.

And so when the funding is available, make sure it comes direct through BIE and to the tribes, or if it's directly available from Department of Ed, to the tribes directly bypassing even BIE. And so that would be the most expeditious way to get the funding.

And so next I am just going to list a few -- (Telephonic interference) -- number one, there's Chromebooks for distance learning, that or laptops or any other devices that might --

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could work with telecommunications.

Wifi systems. The hard thing with wifi systems is that it's not so much that the computers and laptops are not capable, it's that wifi systems are not readily available in the communities where the students reside. And so that needs to be supported as well.

Provide funding for services that are supplemental, such as last mile providers, and a suggestion is using new technology. Well, it's actually old technology but it's used now as a way of getting wifi and internet service to local hard-to-come-by communities. It's called TV white space. And so I'll send some more info on it.

And then if there's funding for large amount of paper and printing at a large-scale level for the schools all across the land, and you got to remember that Indian communities also have attendance numbers, large numbers sometimes, at public school. So the public school also need

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to get the same kind of funding as would the BIE school.

And, finally, there's a large number of training needs for teachers, teachers' aides, parents, and community members, and I believe that if we all learn together we can provide a better resource to all of our students who are now facing the learn -- distance learning, or learning pretty much on their own sometimes.

So with that, I thank you for this opportunity.

MR. SALLEY: Great. Thank you, Joe.

Mardella, do we have any additional tribal leaders on the line?

THE OPERATOR: Yes, sir. Dr. Nadine Eastman has raised their hand to provide a comment. We will unmute the line at this moment.

MR. SALLEY: Great. Dr. Eastman, you're welcome to provide your comment.

DR. EASTMAN: How about now? Can you hear me?

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THE OPERATOR: Yes.

MR. SALLEY: Perfectly.

DR. EASTMAN: Okay. This is Dr. Nadine Eastman. I am from -- a member of the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate, and I am the superintendent of the -- one of our schools, Enemy Swim Day School. And I just wanted to address a few of the questions.

Number one, with the need -- we have needs for PPE, protective equipment. We are delivering two-week grocery boxes. So we have our bus drivers and a lot of our helpers -- I've actually been jumping on the buses too, and we are delivering two-week grocery boxes for families with a lot of other items that we have been taking in.

So we have been lucky that our tribal emergency management has been providing us with a few good masks and we ordered masks several weeks ago. But it's really hard to come by. It's hard to get sanitizer. It's hard to get things

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like that.

And then our students and our families, they need those grocery boxes. So this first pot of money, this \$46.1 million, that will help with our technology because we sent out iPads and we sent out Chromebooks and we did the internet connectivity with our families and we have all but three families connected that way.

So that will help with the technology part. But this other pot of money will help with all the food that we are sending out and with our trying to get our hands on some protective equipment.

And I wanted to talk about, three, I liked during the ARRA time when there was a simple little form we all filled out and we customized how we needed to send our allotment, our funding that we got for our school, on just a basic form and we put our plan together and we submitted it. It was approved and then we got our funding and then we had to put in our report together at the

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end.

So that's my recommendation for how to prioritize, is let it happen at the local level. The schools know what they need at their area and, you know, some people need things like Chromebooks, like the other gentleman talked about, and some people might need other services.

And then, finally, I really am on the call today to talk about the allocation, because I feel like tribal colleges and all colleges and universities were already set up for distance learning.

So I think the -- (Telephonic interference) -- to be the case while -- (Telephonic interference). We took teachers that didn't -- (Telephonic interference) -- any technology -- (Telephonic interference) -- e-learning environment where you have to communicate with kids.

I have all of my teachers using their personal cell phones to contact parents and

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families. So it's brand new to the K-12 system and I think, you know, with the \$20 million they got off the top already for the universities and, you know, their session is ending now. This next week most colleges are done and we are going to the end of May, extended our school year. Plus, we have an e-learning summer school that we are trying to start right away by June 8th.

So I say prioritize the funding for K-12 BIE-funded schools. That's all I have to share.

(Native language spoken.)

MR. SALLEY: Great. Thank you, Dr. Eastman.

Mardella, do we have additional tribal leader comments this morning -- or, this afternoon?

THE OPERATOR: Hi, Robert. The next person that's raised their hand to provide a comment is Sandra Boham.

MR. SALLEY: Great. We are ready for

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your comment. Please go ahead, Sandra.

And, Sandra, if you're on mute we cannot hear you at this time.

THE OPERATOR: If you're going to use your microphone on your computer, you'll need to make sure that that's also enabled on your end.

Okay. We have just received notification that Sandra has stepped away from the meeting at this moment.

MR. SALLEY: Great. And do we have any other additional tribal leaders that wish to participate at this time?

THE OPERATOR: It looks like Sandra has come back with her hand raised again. So we have, again, enabled her microphone.

I apologize. My screen just moved. Yes, Sandra's microphone has been enabled.

MR. SALLEY: Great. Sandra, please go ahead.

Looks like we may have lost Sandra.

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Is there any additional tribal leaders on the line this morning -- this afternoon, that wishes to participate?

THE OPERATOR: At the moment, we don't have any other tribal leaders who have self-identified and raised their hand.

MR. SALLEY: Okay. We will move at this point in time to open up our comment period for the broader public. The same procedures do apply this afternoon. We ask that when you're ready to provide a comment, that you raise your hand by selecting the person icon on the toolbar at the top of your screen.

We will begin shortly.

And, Mardella, do we have anybody ready?

THE OPERATOR: David Gomez has raised his hand to provide a comment. Please one moment while we unmute his line.

MR. SALLEY: Great. David, go ahead. I believe your line is unmuted. You can go ahead

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and provide your comment.

MR. GOMEZ: Good morning. This is David Gomez. I am an attorney from Santa Fe, New Mexico. I am from Taos Pueblo where I am enrolled and my clan is Kiyanni, my Navajo side, and I was born for the Big Area People at Taos Pueblo.

I represent a number of Navajo school boards out in the Navajo Nation and I would like to know if when the funds are distributed whether they will be going directly to the grantees under the Tribally Controlled Schools Act or if it's going to be going to the nation, to the Navajo Nation?

MR. DEARMAN: Thank you, Mr. Gomez. This is Tony Dearman, BIA Director.

The way we have been issuing the funding is exactly what Councilman Garcia had talked about with -- through the grant amendment.

So the 297 schools we would be doing grant amendments and making to the -- 297 schools, the grantees. That's how it would be

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issued.

MR. GOMEZ: Okay. And I have an additional question.

MR. DEARMAN: Okay.

MR. GOMEZ: Which is, if the grant schools engage in any sort of community efforts regarding these funds and responding to the pandemic, would they also have FTCA coverage for those activities they engage in using these funds?

MR. DEARMAN: I am not familiar with FTCA.

MR. GOMEZ: Well, that's the -- yeah, that's the Federal Tort Claims Act. Basically, we -- grant schools are deemed to be employees of the -- of the BIA, BIE for liability purposes as long as they are carrying out their purposes of their school grants.

So if they engage in any activities under their grants they have the same -- they are protected the same way a federal employee would

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be.

Now, if they use these funds to respond to the -- to the pandemic would they also have FTCA coverage for activities engaged in while using those funds?

MR. DEARMAN: You know, Mr. Gomez, I really -- I appreciate the questions and what I would really ask of you is if you could send the questions to us so we can make sure that our solicitors review and respond to your questions.

MR. GOMEZ: All right.

MR. DEARMAN: Absolutely. Thank you.

MR. GOMEZ: Okay. Thank you.

MR. SALLEY: Thank you, sir, for the comment.

Mardella, do we have anybody else ready in the queue to provide a comment?

THE OPERATOR: Yes, sir. Joanne Benally has raised her hand and at this time her line is being unmuted.

MR. SALLEY: Great. Joanne, we are

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ready for your comment.

MS. BENALLY: Good morning, leaders.

(Native language spoken.)

My comment is basically straightforward, and the Navajo Nation Board of Education on the Navajo Nation they were extending -- they were hoping for an invitation to this listening session.

That was the only thing that I had posted out there earlier. I don't know if anyone wants to extend an invitation to them with the second session.

That's basically it. Thank you.

MR. SALLEY: And, Joanne, before you drop off the line, would you provide both just your tribal affiliation and the organization and title that you represent, just for the record?

MS. BENALLY: I currently work for Kayenta Boarding School as a social studies teacher, and teleconferencing from home.

MR. SALLEY: Excellent. Great. We

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will move forward with the next comment.

Mardella, do we have another participant who's expressed interest?

THE OPERATOR: Yes, sir. Tami Hickie has raised her hand next, and at this time we have enabled their microphone.

MR. SALLEY: Great. And just a reminder for everybody during the public comment period, for the transcript and for the record, to please state your name, your tribal affiliation, or your organization and your title that you represent.

And we will go forward with our next person. I believe that's Tami Hickie. Please go.

And Tami, if you're speaking you may be on mute. We are not hearing you at this time.

Tami, can you hear us?

All right. Why don't we move forward to the next participant and we will circle back with Tami at the next juncture?

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THE OPERATOR: Yes, sir. The next individual who has their hand raised is Carrie Billy. At this time, we have unmuted Carrie Billy's line.

MS. BILLY: Hello.

MR. SALLEY: Carrie, the floor is yours.

MS. BILLY: Hello. This is Carrie Billy with the American Indian Higher Education Consortium. Can you hear me?

MR. SALLEY: We can.

MS. BILLY: Okay. Thank you. Thanks for organizing, or reorganizing, today's call. I just wanted to specifically mention, well, a couple of things.

But, one, we really don't believe there's a question about whether the funding should be split between K-12 and tribal colleges.

We think the funding that's -- that flows to the BIE is intended to help all tribal education and all tribal education should be

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included, including tribal colleges.

And tribal colleges did get a specific mention in the short-term emergency of \$20 million. At the same time the K-12 school, the BIE -- the rest of BIE got \$46 million. So, and that was for emergency short-term needs.

There was a comment about the technology needs and how tribal colleges or colleges were set up for distance education.

For the past few years, AIHEC has been doing a study funded by the National Science Foundation that showed 32 of the 35 accredited tribal colleges are in very rural areas, where we all know there's very little access to the internet.

On average, tribal colleges have the most expensive and much slower internet connectivity than any other institutions of higher education in this country.

The average connectivity speed at tribal colleges is 336 megabits, compared to 513

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for other two-year institutions, and 3.5 gigabits for other four-year institutions.

The average annual cost for internet access is \$40,000 to \$250,000 for tribal colleges. We have one tribal college, Iłlisiaġvik College, that has the most expensive and slowest internet connectivity in the entire U.S. higher education system.

The industry standard for IT equipment replacement is three to five years. At tribal colleges the average IT equipment replacement time line is 8.3 years.

So tribal colleges have a significant need in terms of IT infrastructure -- building out their IT infrastructure. What they are doing now with the small amount of funding they've received, remember it's \$20 million. So this funding would be -- would be split over 35 institutions, some covering reservations that are larger than several states.

So they are putting up community-based

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hot spots so the students can access the internet more safely, closer to their homes, but in community locations. And those hot spots are benefitting K-12 schools, telemedicine and other community service needs throughout Indian Country.

So their need -- I mean, need is widespread. I know there's other tribal colleges and other people who want to share the needs. But across the board student emergency aid needs, the loss of tribal support because of the casino and other enterprise losses.

But we will be submitting written comments to document more of these needs. But, again, our focus is on listing all of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal education.

Thank you.

MR. SALLEY: Great. Thank you so much for that comment, Carrie.

Mardella, do we have an additional person who's ready to go in the queue?

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THE OPERATOR: Yes, sir. Sandra Boham has raised her hand again, and at this time we have enabled her microphone.

MR. SALLEY: Great. Sandra, the floor is yours.

If you're on mute we still can't hear you.

THE OPERATOR: Sandra, it looks like on our end you are accessing this via the microphone on your laptop. Please make sure that that microphone has been unmuted as well in your settings.

MR. SALLEY: Sandra's indicated she's on the phone. There may be a couple hiccups so we will try to work through that and circle back with you, Sandra. Our team at Tribal Tech will work on that.

Let's move forward to the next comment, to the next person who may be ready to go.

THE OPERATOR: Yes, sir. The next

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person who has raised their hand is Charles Roessel. At this time we have enabled their microphone.

MR. SALLEY: All right. Charles, the floor is yours.

Can you hear us?

Charles, can you hear us for this comment?

THE OPERATOR: And, Charles, if you're using the microphone on your computer you'll need to make sure that it's been enabled.

If you're on the phone, you'll need to make sure that you allow the system to call you directly so that it can be linked with your guest login, which has your name and your hand raised.

MR. SALLEY: Well, perhaps it's not working. Let's move forward to the next comment and we will try to move back with these folks who have had a couple of connection issues.

THE OPERATOR: Yes, sir. The next individual with their hand raised is Matthew

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Macarah. I apologize if I said that wrong. We have enabled Matthew's microphone.

MR. SALLEY: Matthew, please, the floor is yours.

THE OPERATOR: I think everybody's having issues.

MR. SALLEY: Let's try again for Matthew to see if we can get him connected. Matthew, can you hear us?

THE OPERATOR: It might be helpful just to remind everyone that in order to provide public comment you will need to make sure that you've allowed the system to dial out to you.

If that prompt did not appear when you first logged into the Adobe Meeting Room, you can do so by clicking on the phone at the top of the toolbar and inserting your number when prompted, and the system will dial out to you. The call will come from a phone number with a 303 area code.

All right. At this time, David Conner

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has raised his hand and we have unmuted his line.

MR. SALLEY: David, can you hear us?

MR. CONNER: Yes. Good morning, and thank you for having the consultation session. I am Dave Conner with the Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians in Minnesota, and I would like to make a comment that there are two BIE programs that I haven't heard talked about much, and those programs are tribal scholarships and Johnson-O'Malley.

And those funds, under BIE, go out to tribes to provide needed tribal scholarships to our students and for JOM to help provide necessary supplies and that to help children succeed.

And when looking at the -- you know, the language in the law, that the funding is for programs operated or funded by the BIE, I would think that those programs are and should be included in a distribution.

For example, out of the \$153 million,

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if they could provide, like, \$10 million for tribal scholarships and a few million for Johnson-O'Malley, the -- you know, the total amount taken out of the \$153.5 million isn't that large, and yet you can reach a broad audience of tribal youth who are also in need of stabilization.

So that's my comment. I think we should consider a portion of the funds going for tribal scholarships and JOM. Thank you.

MS. RYDER: Thank you, Dave, for your comment.

MR. SALLEY: Great. Mardella, do we have another participant ready to go?

THE OPERATOR: I apologize. I was on mute.

Yes, sir. Matthew has dialed in and at this time his phone line has been unmuted.

MR. SALLEY: Great. Matthew --

MR. MACARAH: Good afternoon.

MR. SALLEY: Good afternoon. Can you

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provide your name, your tribal affiliation, and your organization or title?

MR. MACARAH: Roger. This is Matt Macarah. I am principal at Sanostee Day School for the Navajo Nation.

I wanted to start with, you know, thanking our districts for sending PPE. I requested it, you know, on a Friday last week and, you know, we got it this week, and for delivering the food for the drivers and the cooks. You know, it's great to have safety being the first priority and get such a great response.

The second thing I'd like to say is with this influx of new technology, right now I am planning on using Title II funds to train my teachers. But I am concerned about the IT support for getting all of these hot spots, new computers, and new technology put into place, particularly for some of the smaller schools.

You know, right now I do most of the IT. But my IT experience is not extensive and it

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would be great to make sure there's some support, either outside contractors or bolstering the BIE tech support system to help make sure all these purchases and hardware is put into place effectively and quickly.

Thank you.

MS. RYDER: Thank you for your comment.

MR. SALLEY: Great. Mardella, do we have another comment in the queue ready to go? Another participant?

THE OPERATOR: Yes, sir. Charles has reconnected and his line has been unmuted.

MR. SALLEY: All right. Charles, can you hear us?

MR. ROESSEL: Yeah. Can you hear me?

MR. SALLEY: We can hear you perfectly.

MR. ROESSEL: All right. First of all, thank you for this opportunity to have this conversation, and hello, Tony, and to you,

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Robert. This is Monty.

So I am -- my name is Monty Roessel, Charles Monty Roessel. I am president of Diné College. And so I want to speak and kind of give comments based on what we are dealing with here at Navajo.

As many of you know, this COVID-19 is impacting everybody but is really hitting us hard here in Navajo, and some things that we have to deal with are things that I think this kind of funding is really important.

But before I get started, the first thing I wanted to say is, in the introduction, the Assistant Secretary said that ED has offered to transfer.

I really take exception to that wording, offered. It's in the law. It's not -- it's not up to ED to say to Indian tribes, we are going to offer you money. This is money that is actually in the law, and now it's about how do we distribute that. So that's the first thing.

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Tribal colleges have close to 32,000 students enrolled. I believe BIE entirely has close to 48,000. If you look at what we -- also then the community, we are about equal in terms of the communities we serve and the places that we are in, and I think the law is very specific, as Carrie Billy mentioned earlier, that tribal colleges would be a part of Indian education, going forward.

I think one of the things that I want to bring up is that, you know, we have dorms and a lot of the schools K-12 have dorms, too. One of the challenges we have, based specifically here, is keeping dorms open even when the classes are not.

So we have students who are staying in dorms right now that we have changed and we have modified because their parents are emergency room nurses and they do not want them to be put at risk by being at home.

So those types of situations are

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things that we deal with on a case by case basis, and we have to try to then now make our dorms very different in terms of addressing the needs of a community and not just the needs of a school, which I think is important.

And when it comes down to, you know, we talk about what kind of counseling we need, one of the things that's very important and it's just making it clear and stating the obvious, that traditional counseling be allowed and ensure that those types of counseling are available to students for K-12 as well as at the college level, and sometimes that is -- it ends up happening on the back end when you're audited and people are saying, well, where are the credentials of these people? So I just want to make sure that we have that listed there.

The other is, because of this COVID-19 the last quarter of students -- high school students, graduating students, has been lost. We can make all the -- make up a lot of the

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challenges but it's still lost.

And so rather than trying to split tribal colleges from BIE-funded schools, we should be trying to create a bridge, and that bridge is how can K-12 and tribal colleges work together to help kind of reinstate that lost quarter that most of our students have had where they are at, and allow them to be better able to address college, going forward, and moving forward?

And so I think those types of programs where we go beyond the barriers that seems to be identified within this public comment, of saying is it either this or -- and remember it's both, and. It's both tribal colleges and universities and K-12 institutions, as we go forward. And that, I think, is something where we could work together again. The professional development that's needed with our faculty is the same professional type development in terms of addressing online education that our K-12 family

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also need, and we can work on this together.

And I think the other thing that I think is really important is allowing the opportunity to have, you know, these -- with BIE, you know, you have on Navajo, you know, 65 schools across the reservation utilizing classes based in a strategic way that could help provide education for students who may not be able to go to, you know, the schools where they live, and look at education beyond the borders and beyond the enrollment areas, and I think that's something that TCUs and K-12s can work together.

And so I think it's really important that we reframe this conversation, that this is a very either/or conversation and I think us in Indian Country, while we all are fighting for money we are fighting for our students, going forward.

And so I think, you know, in terms of what we are looking at, you know, we all need this, you know, the backbone that we need, the

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broadband access. We all need that in our communities and this helps.

So when we provide backbone here at Tsaile, Arizona, it's impacting Lukachukai Boarding School, it's impacting Crystal Boarding School, it's impacting the schools that are around us.

So this is not an either/or conversation, and I'll stop there because I could always call back tomorrow. Thank you.

MR. DEARMAN: Thank you, Dr. Roessel, for the comment.

MR. SALLEY: Yes. Thank you, Monty. We appreciate it.

All right. Great. Mardella, do we have our next person in the queue ready to go?

THE OPERATOR: Yes, sir. Rod Bird has raised their hand to provide a comment and at this time their microphone has been enabled.

MR. SALLEY: Great. Please go ahead. The floor is yours.

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We may not be able to hear you. You may be on mute.

MR. SALLEY: Mardella, can you try again with getting the last person that asked us again? I think there's a little bit of an issue with that. Mardella, I don't think we were able to get that person connected. Can we go to the next person in the queue?

THE OPERATOR: Yes, sir. I apologize. I had my phone muted. The next person in the queue again is Sandra Boham. We are enabling her microphone at this time. I know that there were some issues with her phone line getting disconnected.

Sandra, are you able to utilize the microphone at this time?

(No audible response.)

THE OPERATOR: Okay. And then the next person with their hand raised is David Guzman. I am sorry. David Gomez. And we have also enabled his microphone at this time.

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MR. SALLEY: Great. David, can you hear us?

MR. GOMEZ: Yes. Can you hear me?

MR. SALLEY: Yes, we can. It'd be helpful to get your name, tribal affiliation, organization, and your title for the record today.

MR. GOMEZ: Yeah. This is David Gomez again, Taos Pueblo, attorney in Santa Fe representing grant schools on the Navajo Nation.

Dr. Roessel raised a really, really good question that I think we are going to need some guidance on, which is how those grant schools that have residential operations are going to need to set up their dorms for the return of school back in the fall.

Is BIE going to be putting out any guidance on setting up dorms and classrooms at that point? And I have another question after that.

MR. DEARMAN: Hey, Mr. Gomez. This is

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Tony Dearman again. We have started a discussion on how to support our residential students and the way we look at that is the dorms are their home. So we would actually support our students in the residential setting like we would if they were day students traveling home at night.

So we have had that discussion and, again, you know, we are treating it that that is their home.

MR. GOMEZ: Right. Well, the question comes up because, as you know, one of the areas that are most hard hit by the pandemic are congregated living situations such as nursing homes, and I am just wondering -- and also hotels have been cut down to 50 to 25 percent capacity. So I am wondering if BIE has given any thought about how to deal with that situation when school comes back.

MR. DEARMAN: Thanks again for the question.

That's definitely something we would

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be looking for CDC guidance, working with the tribes as well. You know, depending on the level of pandemic at that time, if it's still in a situation that we need to include everyone around the table we will definitely do that in the process of putting out guidance. So there'll be a lot more people involved than just BIE for that.

MR. GOMEZ: Right. And I had another question stemming from the call I think we had last week on this in which -- it's my recollection that the CARES Act funds are going to be distributed on a weighted student unit basis, and I wonder if you guys have gotten around to attaching a dollar amount per WSU for these purposes.

MR. DEARMAN: That's the purpose of this listening session today, Mr. Gomez, is to hear from the stakeholders and tribal leaders of how the -- how everyone feels like we should be distributing the funding, where it should be allocated to, the amounts, and possibly even the

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methods in distributing.

So if that's a recommendation that we distribute by WSU then that's what we are looking for today.

MR. GOMEZ: Okay. So that's not a final decision on behalf of the department then?

MR. DEARMAN: With 153, no, it's not.

MR. GOMEZ: Okay. All right. Well, thank you very much.

MR. SALLEY: Great. Let's move forward with our next person. Thank you for your comment. Let's move forward with the next person who has their hand raised.

THE OPERATOR: Yes, sir. The next person with their hand raised is Patty Marks and at this time the line has been unmuted for Patty.

MR. SALLEY: Great. Patty, can you hear me?

MS. MARKS: I can hear you. Can you hear me?

MR. SALLEY: Yes. Great.

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MS. MARKS: Okay. My name is Patty Marks. I am an attorney with Fredericks Peebles & Patterson. We represent a number of the small tribally-controlled schools: Crazy Horse, Standing Rock, Rock Creek.

And I'd like to echo on behalf of them the comments made by Dr. Nadine Eastman. There is such a discrepancy the day schools have as to need and current capability.

You have very small schools where PPE and food delivery to students is of critical importance and those schools have a variety of different levels of capability as to internet and distance learning.

There's no question that all the schools believe strongly in learning as a primary goal and objective of their school boards. But the goals of protecting staff with PPE and protecting students and their families with food are equally important.

So I thought her comment about

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allowing the tribal schools to set their own priorities for the use of this money, especially those schools that are starting out with a number of unique needs based on size and location.

So I would encourage you to please consider that. We also echo the statements made about those who are looking for the funding to go directly to schools because we need to get this money out there now.

We have got people who are desperately in need today. So thank you for your time.

(Telephonic interference.)

MR. SALLEY: Okay. Sorry for that technical difficulty there. Let's move forward, and thank you, Patty, for your comment this afternoon. Let's move forward with the next person.

(Telephonic interference.)

MR. SALLEY: Great. Mardella, were you able to get the next comment -- the next person queued up in the participant list?

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THE OPERATOR: Yes, sir. The next person that has raised their hand is Russell Swagger, and at this time his microphone has been enabled.

MR. SALLEY: Great. Please go ahead.

(No audible response.)

MR. SALLEY: If you're on mute we can't hear you. So we may have you try use the icon to unmute yourself.

(No audible response.)

MR. SALLEY: Russell, can you hear us?

(No audible response.)

MR. SALLEY: It looks like we are not going to be able to get a connection right now. Why don't we move forward to the next person who's in the queue?

THE OPERATOR: Yes, sir. The next person in the queue I have is David Nez. At this time we enabled his microphone.

MR. SALLEY: All right, David. If you can hear us please go ahead.

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MR. NEZ: Can you hear me?

MR. SALLEY: We can.

MR. NEZ: Okay. So my name is David Nez. I am the executive director and superintendent of Pinehill Schools for the Ramah Band of Navajo in Pinehill, New Mexico.

So one of the things I just wanted to comment on is we have three satellite reservations that are not on the main Navajo Nation. We have Tohajiilee, which is located near Albuquerque, New Mexico. We have Alamo, which is located towards Socorro, New Mexico. And then we have Ramah here, Navajo Band name.

And a lot of the FEMA funding goes through the state of Arizona and it goes through the Navajo Nation. So it's distributed on Navajo and then they reach out to us but a lot of times because of the distance you don't get the full amount that are sent to us.

And we are in a mountainous remote area. We did a survey with our students with our

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continuous learning plan and tried to find out how many of our students had internet access.

And we found out that over 52 percent of our students do not. We are working with an e-rate program with Oso Internet Solutions and we have a tower here. So that made it very difficult to try to get -- to reach out to our students with our continuous learning plan.

So we developed some hot spots here at the Pinehill School only to find out that most of our students did not have transportation to come to our hot spots on our -- on our campus.

So that's one of the things is I know we -- it's already been settled saying that we are going to use the WSU for the funding distribution.

I just wish that there was another variable or indicator that was also for the remoteness of the location of the school because we are very remote here. We are in a mountainous area.

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So every day we are delivering food. We are working with the chapter house to deliver food to the residents out in the community. We are reaching out with water and others here on the band's land.

So that's one of the issues, though. We have put in a short and a long-term plan. So what the long-term indicators are saying that there might be another surge in October. So I want the BIE to have a long-term plan of what it actually might look like going into the future.

I mean, when our students return we might have to have masks for everybody, face shields, or having to divide up classrooms into smaller groups maybe on some abbreviated schedule.

The dormitories where the students are housed here is another indicator. How are we going to account for social distancing? How are we going to account for the PPEs for every student in our school?

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So I know there's some issues right now, that things are talked about. But I want the BIE to also be aware that we have the IT needs: the distance learning, the virtual classrooms. We are working on that right now with my education leadership team. But also we are working with the clinic to get the PPE, the personal protective equipment, out to the parents and also out to the -- to the students.

The other part is the education of how this virus is transmitted and how it travels from person to person, and they need that education because a lot of our children that come from traditional homes where maybe they don't really understand the science of it. So we have been working with the radio stations.

Our biggest need here is the technology, and I just want to let the BIE leadership that what we are doing out here.

The other thing I want to touch on lastly is we had been approved for a new gym

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construction and a renovation of our school building here, and that has just come to a complete stop. And maybe, going forward, we need to rethink of how these classrooms will be designed as we go into the future.

And then, lastly, I want to add that our water wells -- we have two wells here. One we have to pay for and partly on our own. Now, we reached out to BIE but they told us that when you became a 100-297 school it was written over entirely to you so it is now your problem.

So, you know, the BIE e-students -- when they built these schools, you know, I think they still have the responsibility of how they should help us here because we are educating Indian children out here in Indian Country. That needs to be taken into consideration.

And also I want to thank Dr. Roessel for bringing up the traditional ceremonial way of addressing the mental and health needs of our people. So that is very -- in addition to this.

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So thank you for giving me the time to address the BIE leadership. I want to thank all of you for what you're doing, reaching out to us and having these listening sessions.

So thank you, everybody.

(Native language spoken.)

MS. RYDER: Thank you, David, for your comments.

MR. SALLEY: Great. Mardella, are we ready for the next person in the queue?

THE OPERATOR: Yes, sir. The next person will be Sandra Boham. Her phone number has been connected and her microphone -- her phone line has been unmuted.

MR. SALLEY: Hi, Sandra. Can you hear me?

DR. BOHAM: Can you hear me now, too?

MR. SALLEY: Perfect. We can perfectly hear you. I am glad we were able to get you connected. It'd be great if you'd provide us your name, tribal affiliation, and your

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organization and title for the record today.

DR. BOHAM: Thank you so much.

Dr. Sandra Boham, president, Salish Kootenai College on the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of Flathead Indian Reservation.

I have a few comments to make today. I think it's really important that we understand that both K-12 and higher ed are working together to educate all of our students.

But the tribal college funding case is a little bit -- not as straightforward. So we serve virtually every tribal nation in our -- in this country through our tribal colleges, which there are 36 of us, and we -- our students come to us from backgrounds that we all understand and we have got an incredible list in meeting the technology needs, their training needs, their mental health needs.

And we also on our campus have housing, and in our housing -- so Montana has been in a shelter-in-place since March 16th. And

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so we are taking care of the students in our dorms, which are single students, but also a significant number of students that are in our family housing.

This has been particularly important because in our family housing most of our students are parents and all of the schools have been closed, and so they are being home school teachers at the same time that they are being college students.

So we have had additional support that we have needed to provide to our students and to their families to get them through this piece.

We also provide dual enrollment courses. So we are meeting the needs of high school students beginning in their junior year and going on through into college.

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes do have a contract school and we are in a tight partnership with them and have been for 40 years.

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And we prepare through our college a number of the teachers that are actually employed in the school system and, of course, those students are all impacted with their studies.

We also provide the bulk of the training for our Head Start teachers and program directors.

We also provide a number of health care programs that are providing for all of our medical people in the valley and in the whole state. So, you know, through our nursing and our EMTs, and all of them are impacted significantly as well.

So tribal colleges, although there was a \$20 million set aside, when you spread that between 36 tribal colleges, it really -- while, you know, we were grateful for it, it really does not come close to supporting the needs that exist for our students and for the families that we serve because we don't work like traditional colleges where we only serve our student that's

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attending the school.

We truly are a community program and we are taking care of those students, their children, and their families.

We also at Salish Kootenai College have a childcare center and so, you know, right now we don't have children in that childcare center because we are still in a shelter-in-place situation. But we are providing enrichment to the parents that are trying to manage those children at home while they are still trying to do their courses online. They don't have adequate internet. They don't have adequate technology. Just the basics of making sure that our students are fed and housed, their medications, and their textbooks and the support of our faculty who are also being -- we were not online when this happened. I don't believe probably maybe two of our tribal colleges had some online programs developed. The rest of us went from zero to 90 in two weeks. And so we got

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everything that could possibly be put online online. But we are continuing to have to develop those faculty members to be able to offer those educational experiences in a valid and real way and we are also helping our K-12 teachers in our areas to come up to speed as well because they were not working in a virtual environment either. And so we have reached out to them and offered support and training. Even while we are learning it we are trying to help them as well.

And so the needs are great. I can't even begin to tell you how great they are. I know that just in our valley in Montana where our reservation is located our latest numbers from our community health center, our population here 67 percent of them are in those high-risk categories.

When you are dealing with a population like that, your students and their families in our community that are at 67 percent higher risk then there are additional steps that you have to

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take to meet their needs to keep them mentally and physically well.

And this is going to go on for a while. We know this. We are preparing for the fall to potentially be online. A number of tribal colleges do offer summer programs. That is in flux right now for many of them. We are looking at extended -- an extended term to get some of our hands-on learning that needs to be done if it's safe enough to do that.

But all of that comes at cost. We are going to have to pay those instructors. We are going to have to support those students to keep them whole and well educated and getting what they came here to get, and also have the supports behind them to make sure that they can be successful.

So this is a huge piece and I know that our K-12 partners are feeling the same thing. I think to fully understand the role that tribal colleges play in our communities, we touch

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everything that happens on our reservations because of the role that we serve and the integration that we have with our educators, our government, our service providers, and our children.

And so it's really important that we don't just think of tribal colleges like we would any mainstream four-year institution. We have a mission and we were created for a need that we take very seriously.

But it means that we are always asked to do a great task. We are being asked to meet monumental challenges and we can't do that well if we are not funded well.

And so it's really important not to just think about the dollars but to think about all of the people and programs and who we are serving and who the faces are behind that.

And it really could be not a -- we don't want to have a split between K-12 and higher ed because we are a very tight partnership, which

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is why we are asking for all of us to be funded well, and how that split might happen to accommodate us both.

So yes, the K-12 BIE schools got \$46 million in funding. Tribal colleges got \$20 million in funding. And now there's \$153 million here that would really help to keep us all whole, and we just ask for those considerations, keeping in mind that yes, we work with adults but we also serve virtually everybody in our communities.

And thank you for letting me have this time.

MR. DEARMAN: Thank you so much, Dr. Boham. I really appreciate your comments. Thank you.

MR. SALLEY: Okay. Great. We will go forward. Mardella, do we have another participant ready to go in the queue?

THE OPERATOR: Yes, sir. Charles has raised his hand again to provide another comment. His line has been unmuted.

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MR. SALLEY: All right. Monty, you're up.

MR. ROESSEL: You know what? I did not raise my hand again.

(Laughter.)

MR. ROESSEL: Are you there? But I will -- I will take the opportunity. I think it's -- I just think it is important. You know, when we look at what we are trying to, we here at Navajo we serve the Diné College as well as Navajo Technical University. We serve over 3,200 students that are enrolled on our campuses. That does not include dual credit students that are working as high schools.

I think one of the things and one of the points I would like to just make at this -- at this point is, you know, we have a teacher education program and we have a public health program.

And so by extending the semester and trying to get these students to graduate we are

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actually in a position to help BIE and the K-12 students. Ninety percent of our graduates from our teacher ed program go into BIE-funded schools.

So the partnership we have is when, you know, you take money away at one side it doesn't necessarily help the other, and I think it can actually backfire in this case, and I think it's important that we look at this as a school system meeting the needs of the entire -- all of Indian Country rather than one or the other.

So I think that's something I just want to bring up. I think the other thing, just briefly, is, you know, that we have summer school. I mean, we are in the process of continuing summer school.

To get a lot of these people that are graduating, these students that are getting ready to graduate, to give them an opportunity to go and help in their communities.

Our public health program right now

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is, you know, front line in trying to track and help with this COVID-19.

So, you know, the warriors that we are funding today, the students that we are funding today, they are on the front lines. We have students that are actually working as nurses and public health officials and then they go and do their studies at night.

I get stories, you know, and emails from students all the time, and this is hitting us hard.

Just this past weekend we lost a former student who was the Miss Diné College and she passed away because of this.

So these -- you know, we are talking about millions of dollars but really what we are talking about is people and these funds help people, and Indian Country needs more help.

And so I think I just want to make the case one more time to be able to help the K-12 schools as well as the TCUs as we move forward.

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Thank you for the opportunity. Whatever the glitch was that gave me another opportunity to speak I appreciate it. Those of you that know me I don't turn down an opportunity to speak.

So thank you.

MS. RYDER: Thank you for your comment.

MR. SALLEY: All right. Mardella, are we ready for the next person in the queue?

THE OPERATOR: Yes, sir. The next person in the queue is Michael Oltrogge. I apologize if I said that last name wrong.

MR. OLTROGGE: This is Michael. Can you hear me now?

MR. SALLEY: We can. If you could provide us your name, your tribal affiliation, and your organization.

MR. OLTROGGE: My name is Michael Oltrogge. I am the president of the Nebraska Indian Community College, and I just wanted to

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just kind of really express what Sandra and Monty talked about a little bit, that the tribal colleges certainly help everybody throughout or everybody that we touch within our communities and our reservation.

For example, last week, you know, I had meetings with five of the K-12 districts on the camp or within the federal reservation boundaries just to help everybody get on the same page to figure out how we can create some kind of a broadband backbone to make sure that all of our students can benefit.

And generally that's just kind of what I wanted to share that, you know, we are all in this together and, hopefully, we can all come to a great arrangement to make sure that everybody is successful.

Thank you.

MR. DEARMAN: Thank you, Michael.

MR. SALLEY: Thank you. Mardella, we will move to the next person in the queue.

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THE OPERATOR: Yes, sir. The next person in the queue is Lori Corn, and Lori's line has been unmuted at this time.

MS. CORN: Joe, can you hear me?

MR. SALLEY: Yes, I can.

MS. CORN: Okay. Thank you for the time.

My name is Lori Corn. I am the principal of the Menominee Tribal School out of Wisconsin calling in. I am an advocate for K-12 education.

I hope the Bureau would provide another alternative way to distribute the funding besides the same WSU formula.

From what I am hearing, and I agree with a lot of the comments, that everybody's needs are different. We here in Wisconsin are located in a very remote forest land. So our needs to provide distance learning is costly.

It is imperative that we connect with our students and families to provide that

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education and to keep our students current so they are able to succeed.

We are remote with high needs. We know this going in and we know that this is going to be -- this type of learning is going to be for a while.

I am worried that if the funding doesn't come through for the schools that it's going to -- we could even move students' enrollment to the public state schools who can provide those opportunities.

So I really hope that you think about that.

MR. DEARMAN: Thank you, Lori. This is Tony.

MS. CORN: Thank you for giving me the time.

MR. DEARMAN: Thank you, Lori. This is Tony Dearman. And, again, if you have any recommendations on the distribution formula or how you would like to see the funds go out to the

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field, please recommend that. Suggest that and put it in writing, or if you have an idea right now let us know.

MS. CORN: Okay. Thank you.

MR. SALLEY: Great. Mardella, are we ready for the next person in the queue?

THE OPERATOR: Yes, sir. The next person in the queue is Darrick Franklin and his microphone has been enabled at this time.

MR. SALLEY: All right. Mr. Franklin, you have the floor.

(No audible response.)

MR. SALLEY: Darrick, if you're on mute we cannot hear you right now. So you may need to unmute your line in order to participate.

(No audible response.)

MR. SALLEY: Darrick, have you got yourself unmuted?

(No audible response.)

MR. SALLEY: All right. Let's see if we can skip Darrick for a second. We will come

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back to him at a later juncture just so that we can get more participants this afternoon.

Mardella, who do you have in the next position?

THE OPERATOR: Yes, sir. Next in the queue we have Lorna LaGue. I apologize if I said your last name wrong. At this moment her phone line has been unmuted.

MR. SALLEY: Lorna, can you hear me?

MS. LAGUE: Yes. Can you hear me okay?

MR. SALLEY: Perfectly.

MS. LAGUE: Awesome. So my name is Lorna LaGue and I am calling from the White Earth Reservation in Minnesota. I am president of the White Earth Tribal and Community College.

I think it's important to acknowledge the intent of Congress when they passed the funding for stabilizing our educational institutions. Our tribal colleges serve almost 32,000 students. In addition to that, we serve another 145,000 community members.

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The pandemic has had a significant impact on all of our institutions. But in order to continue to provide services, it's important to consider our tribal colleges are serving about 41 percent of the overall BIE students.

Here in rural Minnesota where we are, when the pandemic first started our biggest challenges were, first, to get computer and internet service to students before we could even consider starting online classes.

Our area struggles with connectivity issues and areas where we don't even have cell service available. The transition to move online is always difficult.

But it's even more difficult when we can't even connect to the internet or have the tools that are needed to do it.

So we are encouraging the funding to be flexible and follow the CARES Act allowable uses because our needs are so great in K-12 and tribal colleges. But we are all a little

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different and we have diverse needs in order to continue to serve our community members of all ages.

And I just want to thank you all for the time today and allowing us all to provide some input in English.

MS. RYDER: Thank you for your comments. I appreciate it.

MR. SALLEY: Great. Mardella, we are ready for the next person in the queue, unless you wanted to see if Mr. Franklin is ready to go.

THE OPERATOR: It does look like Mr. Franklin has now dialed in and his line has been unmuted.

MR. FRANKLIN: Hi. This is Darrick Franklin. Can you hear me?

MR. SALLEY: We can hear you perfectly, Mr. Franklin.

MR. FRANKLIN: That's cool. I am not sure if these questions have been asked prior. I got kicked out of the webinar a couple of times

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and I don't know if it's the connection or what. But I hope -- I hope I am not repeating some of the questions that were already asked.

So we are trying to get -- seek qualification so that we can provide the best comments for our president of the Navajo Nation. So I have a couple of questions that I need clarified.

So in terms of the WSU, the weighted student unit, is that the same formula that you're going to be -- you're going to use in terms of the distribution of these funds to each BIE--funded school?

MR. DEARMAN: Thank you, Darrick. This is Tony.

That's why we are -- that's the purpose of the call. We need to hear from our tribal leaders and stakeholders, how they think that the money should be distributed and the formula used. So we are open for recommendations.

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MR. FRANKLIN: Okay. We will have that on Thursday. So the next question is the time line. Is there a time line for these -- the CARES Act funds? If there's a time line are there going to be restrictions? Because what has happened in the past is that a lot of times our schools here on -- first of all, my name is Darrick Franklin, Department of Diné Education. I forgot to mention that. And I work for the Office of Accountability and Compliance. And so in terms of the time line, if there's a time line for these funds, what has happened in the past is that sometimes our schools are penalized for funds they don't use within a given time span.

And this shows up in their audits. This shows up in Congress, saying that we gave you guys these funds and we see a huge carryover. Are there going to be times where -- is there going to be a time frame is what I need -- and penalties. If you can clarify that.

MR. DEARMAN: Again, this is Tony.

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That's the purpose of this entire call. We need to hear comments. We need to hear recommendations and what should be determined with these funds, Mr. Franklin.

So we are open for any recommendations as far as what you in the field and that others feel like we should be looking at.

As far as punishing schools, that's not the intent of the CARES Act.

MR. FRANKLIN: Okay. Thank you for that --

MR. DEARMAN: You talked about -- you talked about the restrictions on funding. You know, there's been some comments on here today talking about being able to allow local decisions to be made and even talking about the DOE guidance.

So if you weren't part of the call earlier, that's some of the recommendations that have been recommended.

Thank you.

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MR. FRANKLIN: Okay. So I speak for the Navajo Nation in terms of the tribal education, the department that we have established here on the nation, some of -- some of the tribes like the Navajo Nation have -- they have basically a system in place that mimics BIE's setup in terms of assisting BIE tribally-controlled schools.

Is there -- I guess is there room for some of these funds to be allocated to tribal education departments or tribal education agencies so that we can further assist these schools in times of where there's a lot of demand?

Specifically in the case of Navajo, we have 66 schools that are Navajo. So a lot of times it's hard for the Navajo ADD or even with the Department of Education to get to these schools in a timely manner.

So is there a rule for some of these funds going to TEDs or TEAs?

MR. DEARMAN: Again, Mr. Franklin,

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this is Tony. That's the purpose of the call. We are listening to the field and we are listening to recommendations, and all the recommendations will definitely be considered.

MR. FRANKLIN: Okay.

MR. DEARMAN: And if that's what you're recommending let us know. Thank you.

MR. FRANKLIN: Okay. So then the last two that I have is that under the CARES Act that we'd strongly like to recommend that pre-K be involved if it's not already, involved in terms of K-12 so that -- because some of our schools do have these programs that offer services to pre-K students.

And then the last question is that as you know, Navajo Nation has been hit hard with COVID-19 and some of these schools will need to be deep cleaned so that the staff have a comfortable level of going back to work and feeling safe that their schools have been cleaned and sanitized to avoid reinfection.

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So I guess those will be included in our statement on Thursday.

MR. DEARMAN: Thank you, Mr. Franklin. Appreciate it.

MR. SALLEY: Great. Mardella, we are ready for the next person in the queue.

THE OPERATOR: Yes, sir. The next person in the queue is Leander McDonald, and at this time their phone line has been unmuted.

MR. SALLEY: Leander, we are -- can you hear us?

MR. MCDONALD: I think I am on now.

MR. SALLEY: Great. The floor is yours. Yes, we can.

MR. MCDONALD: (Native language spoken.)

We just want to say hello to all our friends and relatives and shake all of your hands in a good way.

My name is Russ (Leander) McDonald. I am a member of the Spirit Lake Tribe and a proud

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descendent of the Hidatsa, Arikara, and Hunkpapa peoples, president for United Tribes Technical College located in Bismarck, North Dakota.

I want to, first of all, just thank the Department of Ed and Bureau of Indian Education for holding this listening session to get our input from across Indian Country on tribal education.

From today's comments we see that the need is great for all of our nations and across tribal education from kindergarten to the college level.

United Tribes Technical College, as a residential school, not only serves Native college students but also the children of our employees by providing a daycare and now elementary school.

So we kind of have both schools on our campus. We currently have about 46 tribal nations represented in our student body. We have had some challenges, too, in regards to going to

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online, although we were already approved by the Higher Learning Commission for the provision of online education.

We have a food pantry on campus and our cafeteria continues to provide meals at both college and elementary level students with two meals a day.

We continue to house students who have no place to go. This is their home. We are providing counseling services for those who are having a difficult time and to transitioning into this way of educating. It's a little bit different and those education needs I think is a big factor, especially for tribal people, and it's kind of a cultural shift in the way we usually interact.

We have provided computers to our college students and Chromebooks to our elementary students to help them complete their education for this semester.

We are extending our semester and

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continuing our summer session. We are continuing our -- we are extending our spring semester and then we are continuing our summer semester online as our students are motivated to complete their programs and to graduate.

We have a -- we also have an elementary education degree program of study. So we are providing teachers to the K-12 system.

We also have summer youth programs and science programs throughout the regular academic year where we partner with the schools and with other tribal colleges here within the state of North Dakota and also in service to the five tribes of North Dakota.

And I just wanted to say that we are -- you know, we are in this together. I heard somebody else say it in the call here.

So we know directly from this experience that there's significant need across campus at both our college and elementary school. But I think we are a little bit unique in that

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sense.

But I am hearing the same things in today's discussion such as IT infrastructure. You know, I know we are looking at fiber optic and the importance of fiber optic and hardware connections to off learning off campus.

Updated servers and computers labs enhance internet speed and wifi capabilities. These are things that were on our wish list. I think we might be able to do some of that work, given some support.

The other part -- the other thing that I heard is training for teachers, faculty, and support staff to support online education and online for remote -- for working remotely.

A lot of us are working from home for pretty much all of campus. And so I think I am doing the same and trying to be the example. But I go to campus on a daily basis just to go through and check on things. A lot of social distancing.

But I wanted to close out with some

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final thoughts here is that -- is that both our elementary school and our college are formula funded for our head count.

So as previously shared in the files that TCU has received \$20 million off the top. Now, if we are going to say that then we also need to say that the K-12 schools received \$46 million.

And then I also want to say that TCUs account for approximately 41 percent of the total students -- of the total students served.

But we are familiar with the formula model. I believe that the best approach may be to use -- use this methodology to assure all schools are treated equally as all our needs are not greater than the others in this type of situation.

We are kind of used to that. Let's go ahead and implement that. And then lastly, I think to try and be positive, to try to add a positive to this is that, you know, all our needs

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are great and they've been sitting there for a while. We are not adequately funded from the beginning.

But a potential outcome for these resources that we have got significantly strengthen our overall capacity as K-12 and TCU systems by having an infrastructure that -- the IT infrastructure that's needed in order to work this way.

But if this doesn't happen again then we still have that IT infrastructure in place in order to be better educational institutions.

But I think all of us need to take advantage of this opportunity to use these limited resources to make things better as best we can.

So I thank you for this time. I thank you for the opportunity to share a few thoughts.

(Native language spoken.)

MR. MCDONALD: Thank you to everyone.

MS. RYDER: Thank you, Russell, for

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your thoughtful comments.

MR. SALLEY: Thank you. Mardella, we are ready for the next person in the queue.

THE OPERATOR: Yes, sir. The next person in the queue is Haven and Haven's phone line has been unmuted at this time.

MR. SALLEY: Haven, we are ready for you. Can you hear us?

(No audible response.)

MR. SALLEY: If you are on mute, we cannot hear you at this time, Haven.

MS. GOURNEAU: Can you hear me?

MR. SALLEY: Yes, now we can.

MS. GOURNEAU: Okay. Thank you.

You know, I'd just like to reiterate several people have mentioned that, you know, we are in this as a community. I don't think -- I think we are all as important and responsible for educating our communities, and I think most tribal colleges work very close with our local schools.

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Right now, our staff are preparing their lessons and sending home to the kids. They are working at the lunch program.

You know, we are in this together and as Leander stated, you know, we all have the same needs as each other and none of us are separate. We actually work as a community.

And, you know, when they are -- when we talk about funding, we all, of course, want to plug in to our share. But I think just equal funding is fair and, you know, as the group of responsible educators I think we all just need to be for each other at this time.

Thank you.

MR. DEARMAN: Thank you, Haven. I really appreciate that.

MS. GOURNEAU: Sure.

MR. SALLEY: And Haven, before you depart this call, can you provide just your tribal affiliation or your organizational title?

MS. GOURNEAU: Sure.

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MR. SALLEY: Go ahead.

MS. GOURNEAU: My name is Haven Gourneau and I am the president at Fort Peck Community College and we are located in northeastern Montana on the Fort Peck Assiniboine and Sioux Reservation.

Thank you.

MR. SALLEY: Absolutely. Thank you.

So we have about ten minutes remaining. We do want to make sure that we can get in as many people as we can. We have currently three people in the queue that we would like to at least get to.

So we are asking the next three participants to limit your comments to no more than three minutes just so that we can make time today for the remainder of our participants.

Mardella, can you queue up the next person?

THE OPERATOR: Yes, sir. The next individual in line is Robert Martin and Robert's

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line has been muted at this time.

MR. SALLEY: Great. Robert, can you hear us?

DR. MARTIN: Yes. My name is Robert Martin. Can you hear me?

MR. SALLEY: We can hear you perfectly.

DR. MARTIN: Great. I am an enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, and I am president of the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

And I heard some of my colleagues speak on behalf of the TCUs. I am also on the executive committee of AIHEC and so I am just advocating for all of the TCUs.

And has been mentioned, for this K-12 or the tribal colleges and universities we all have unmet need, and assuming we do receive funding from the \$53 million from the BIE's Education Stabilization Fund we still have at least \$57 million in unmet needs.

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As some of the other callers have said, we have slow internet speed. We need to build capacity there. We have already announced for this summer all of our programs will be online. That includes the bridge programs and the dual credit programs that we are continuing to teach thousands in that program.

And the emergency student aid, all of us have issued checks for students' aid this week and they've gone out, and we understand there's still unmet need out there for our students.

Their lives have been disrupted. They've been sent home where, you know, privacy has been a concern and, of course, they have competing tasks at home.

So and this challenge -- there's a lot of stress. We know that we need to get more funds out to our students and we are continuing the work study program. Even though they are not on campus we are continuing to pay the students.

So on behalf of the tribal colleges,

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I am just hoping we can be treated fairly as a K-12 and we all can go forward in addressing our unmet needs and be able to serve our students.

Thank you.

MR. DEARMAN: Thank you, Robert Martin, for that. Appreciate it.

MS. RYDER: Thank you, Robert, for your comments.

DR. MARTIN: You're welcome.

MR. SALLEY: Great. Mardella, we are ready for the next question in the queue.

THE OPERATOR: Yes. So the next person in line is Raymond Burns, and at this time the phone has been unmuted.

MR. BURNS: Can you hear me?

MR. SALLEY: We can.

MR. BURNS: Yes. Hi. Raymond Burns.

I am a member of the Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa and I am president of Leech Lake Tribal College in Cass Lake, Minnesota.

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And I just wanted to kind of reiterate what the other tribal college presidents and what our ED presidents has said in that we -- you know, it's an obvious intent of the funding that this was distributed throughout Indian education.

Not just K-12 but K-16, in some cases K-18, and it's kind of sad that there's this division when Indian education should cover all Indian education.

And I also just want to mention that this sum -- issues with regard to our online, when we switched to online, in order for us to do this, we had to consult with our crediting agencies and most of us just got temporary waivers in order to go online.

In order for us to stay online we are going to have to demonstrate to our crediting agencies that we can support this, and without that and we are still under shelter-in-place rules, it will be very difficult for tribal colleges to continue to offer courses online.

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And then I know we have a quick time limit here. I just want to close by saying that a lot of our students are the parents of the students that are going through K-12.

It will really disillusion the K-12 students to see their parents not being able to continue with their education and that's kind of where we might be at.

So I just urge the Bureau of Education, Department of Education, to provide the funding equitably across all educational institutions.

Thank you much and thank you for your time.

MS. RYDER: Thank you, Raymond, for your comments. We appreciate them.

MR. SALLEY: So, Mardella, we are ready for the next question in the queue.

THE OPERATOR: Yes, sir. The next question in the queue is Brent, and his microphone has been enabled at this time.

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MR. SALLEY: So, Brent, the floor is yours.

(No audible response.)

MR. SALLEY: Brent, if you have not unmuted your microphone we cannot hear you at this time.

(No audible response.)

THE OPERATOR: Brent, it looks like you are connected through the Adobe platform. Please make sure that you have unmuted the microphone on your end as well.

(No audible response.)

MR. SALLEY: Why don't we toggle out until we work out the issues there? Why don't we toggle to the next person so we can just get in as many people as we can this afternoon?

BRENT: Brent Nelson, Department of Diné Education, Navajo Nation. Am I muted?

MR. SALLEY: Is this Brent?

BRENT: Yes, it is.

MR. SALLEY: All right. We can hear

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you. Go ahead.

BRENT: Oh, thank you, and thank you for allowing me to chime in on this discussion. I came a little bit late because I was on a cyber team meeting that's addressing broadband here on Navajo Nation, and I heard a lot of the comments in terms of broadband challenges.

One of the things I would like to add to this conversation and hearing everybody's challenges that a lot of these fundings and a lot of our reservations that are challenged with what they call middle mile connections.

I know the need is to have what's available at the end points. So a lot of times the challenge of connecting the end points in a lot of these grants that are available is it seems like they've been structured more for last mile connectivity.

Now, in order for these connectivity to work as efficiently and effectively, you know, to focus and -- is to focus on the middle mile

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infrastructure.

Some of them are short-term solutions. Some of them are mid-term solutions. Some of them are long-term solutions. But I think with the pandemic and seeing the future of using technology, you know, I think the focus should really be on establishing those long-term initiatives also and building more fiber backbone to a lot of our reservations including here on Navajo.

There's discussions in terms of broadband spectrum for a lot of our service providers that are taking advantage of wireless hot spots.

Here on Navajo there are several hot spots that have been initiated through our local providers but also even with these hot spots going up the demand for broadband connectivity has already reached its max, even with the spectrum -- temporary spectrum that's been given to a lot of our providers.

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So I know there's a lot of e-rate initiatives that have gone out to a lot of our schools here on Navajo but also, I am sure, across the nation.

But expanding on those e-rate services, there's middle mile, last mile, initiatives and I think that we need to maybe look into that from a technical standpoint.

So not really quite sure, you know, the Bureau -- BIE IT or whoever handles their connectivity has looked into these type of assessments.

So but the funding is much needed to support that middle mile infrastructure as well.

Thank you. Just wanted to contribute that information.

MR. SALLEY: Great. We appreciate that.

We are going to squeeze in just one last participant before we close out today.

Mardella, could we queue that person

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up?

THE OPERATOR: Yes, sir. Angelique Albert, your line has been unmuted.

MS. ALBERT: Can you hear me?

MR. SALLEY: Yes, perfectly.

MS. ALBERT: Wonderful. Yes, my name is Angelique Albert. I am a member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of Northwest Montana. I am also the executive director of American Indian Graduate Center, and I thank you for having the listening session today. Thank you, Tony. It's nice to hear everyone's comments.

We fund about 1,400 students right now today from over 250 tribal nations. So our students are in crisis. They are really having problems with food, housing, utilities and kind of basic core emergency needs.

They are being removed from dorms and just needing assistance. So we have raised a lot of money and distributed over \$100,000 to address

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these needs. But the needs keep pouring in.

So I'd really like to encourage funding for student emergency needs. Also, I request that funding continues for, or be increased, to -- for scholarships to keep our students in their colleges.

And then the other thing that is very consistent, and I keep hearing from the participants that I am -- I would like to reiterate and encourage is continued funding for training programs for our instructors at TCUs.

We do fund all of the TCUs, students at the TCUs, as well as training programs. But we know that the need is higher right now. So I'd just like to encourage funding to go to those three areas.

Thank you so much for your time.

MR. DEARMAN: Thank you, Angelique.

MR. SALLEY: All right. Great.

So that brings us to the end of our public comment period today. I'd like to thank

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everyone for your participation regarding the CARES Act funds that had been transferred to BIE.

We tried to cast a broad net for participants today and we hope that our invitation reached everyone's inbox.

We will have a second session on Thursday, April 30th, at the same time, if you were not able to provide comments today.

In addition, we ask that you please forward our invitation to anybody that we know because we'd love to have them participate on Thursday.

As we close out, Ron Lessard will provide more information and go over how to submit written comments. Thank you. Thank you.

Ron?

MR. LESSARD: Thank you. Thank you, Robert.

And so could you please -- I just want to thank Tony Dearman, I want to thank Ruth Ryder, I want to thank Robert Salley for all their

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expertise and the work that they have done and, you know, being a part of this and so that we can provide the information to you that's needed.

In closing, I would like to thank all of our tribal leaders and the stakeholders for your participation today.

We want to point participants to our resource slide on screen now where we invite you to submit written comments through May 1st, 2020, at listeningession@ed.gov.

We also invite you to read more about the Education Stabilization Fund.

Lastly, please contact our staff with further questions at email addresses provided on this slide.

We wish everyone well. Thank you very much for being with us today. Have a great day and be safe. Be healthy.

Thank you. Goodbye.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 11:00 a.m.)

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