



NATIONAL INDIAN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

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Oregon Department of Education
255 Capitol Street NE Salem, OR 97310-0203
stateboard.members@state.or.us

RE: The Use of Indian Mascots in Oregon

Dear State Board Members:

The National Indian Education Association (NIEA) sends this letter in support of a ban on the use of Indian mascots in schools that receive state funding. As the premiere organization advocating for educational excellence, equity, and opportunity for American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities, NIEA promotes a holistic education that not only provides rigorous curriculum and relevant instruction, but also strengthens identity. A ban on the use of Indian mascots in Oregon would create a school environment that helps American Indian students build a strong sense of identity and self-esteem.

The continued use of American Indian mascots, names, symbols, images, and personalities undermines the educational experiences of American Indian students – and all students – because it reinforces the idea that it is acceptable to perpetuate culturally offensive behavior and misconceptions. Every student has the right to learn in a safe environment free from harmful stereotypes.

At NIEA's 2009 annual convention in Milwaukee, NIEA members passed a resolution to eliminate all race-based Indian mascots. In May of 2011, the United State Senate Committee on Indian Affairs held an oversight hearing to address the impact of negative Indigenous stereotypes. Organizations like the National Education Association and National Collegiate Athletic Association have already expressed support for banning the use of American Indian mascots. And while hundreds of institutions have eliminated race-based Indian mascots, our work continues to ensure that these negative stereotypes, where they exist, are stopped.

Thank you for taking these issues seriously and please feel free to contact me at (202) 544-7290 or ckippen@niea.org.

Sincerely,

Colin Kippen
Executive Director

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