



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Health, Education, and Human Services Committee receives report from Teach for America – New Mexico

WINDOW ROCK – On Monday, the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee received a report from representatives for “Teach for America – New Mexico,” a regional organization that provides teaching opportunities to college graduates who are hired to teach in low-income and marginalized communities.

According to the report, TFA representatives said that the program has aimed to improve recruitment efforts to increase the enlistment of Navajo college graduates and teachers to teach on the Navajo Nation. AmeriCorps is the funding and managing agency of the TFA program.

The report also states that TFA teachers are paired with a mentor for two years, are fully licensed in New Mexico, receive one-on-one coaching, and are provided continued professional development to ensure access to career opportunities.

HEHSC member Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi’i’áhi/To’Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tsé ahnáoz’t’í’í) posed several questions to TFA representatives regarding recruitment, retention of teachers, and the creation of incentives for teachers participating in the program.

“I heard from a school board that they were concerned with the perception of AmeriCorps volunteers, in terms of teaching Navajo children. What innovative ways can we approach this? I think it is important to identify challenges and barriers, as well as creating a positive relationship with Navajo communities,” said Delegate Crotty.

Delegate Crotty recommended to TFA that Navajo foster grandparents may serve as another resource to supplement the TFA program to provide a cultural perspective in classrooms.

HEHSC member Council Delegate Nathaniel Brown (Chilchinbeto, Dennehotso, Kayenta) suggested that TFA provide recommendations and further insight to aid committee members in advocating for the program at the state and federal level.

“How can we help? When we go to Washington, D.C., what can we do to help lobby? We want to do everything we can to do to help our people. We have to strategize and do what we can to put our priorities in order to improve education on the Navajo Nation,” said Delegate Brown.

Delegate Brown also stressed the importance of incorporating Navajo language and culture in the TFA teachers’ curriculum, and invited the representatives and teachers to take part in an upcoming Navajo Nation Language and Culture Summit, which will be announced at a later date.

HEHSC members voted 4-0 to accept the report.

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