



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Council Delegate Katherine Benally advocates for acceptance of modular buildings for Navajo Head Start

WINDOW ROCK – Council Delegate Katherine Benally (Chilchinbeto, Dennehotso, Kayenta) met with Navajo Head Start administrators last Wednesday to discuss concerns regarding the Navajo Nation’s pending acceptance of used modular buildings donated by Gallup-McKinley County Schools, authorized by superintendent Frank Chiapetti.

Delegate Benally explained that the acceptance of the modular buildings could only be made official through the approval of Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly.

According to Delegate Benally, she began advocating for the initiative when it was known that GMCS superintendent Chiapetti approached NHS assistant superintendent Sharon Singer, and offered the Nation approximately 90 modular buildings for the NHS program in September 2013.

“We are imploring the President to accept these modular buildings, and if he does not approve them, he is doing a disservice to the Navajo people and children. Otherwise, I will gladly draft legislation to approve the building donations,” said Delegate Benally. “We have over 200 students on a waiting list in Kayenta, waiting to begin head start—this is unacceptable.”

Kayenta Chapter President Stanley Clitso, added that the Kayenta Unified School District has already set aside land areas for future head start infrastructures. Currently, Kayenta’s head start program is housed in two mobile homes that house a maximum of 30 students per building.

In a statement received from the Office of the President and Vice President, President Shelly stated that he is aware of the situation and would like to ensure that the buildings are safe and sufficient for children and staff. He said his chief concern is the current state of most Navajo Head Start buildings, in which he said were “outdated and dilapidated.”

President Shelly said he is looking forward to signing the agreement to accept the modular buildings as soon as the Navajo Nation Division of Diné Education Board and Policy Council approve resolutions to support the efforts of the initiative.

“This is a wonderful opportunity for the Nation to take advantage of,” said Delegate Benally. “Our focus should be on the education and safety of Navajo children, and I believe the acceptance of the modular buildings accomplishes that.”

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