



February 6, 2024

Chair Neron, Vice Chair Hudson, Vice Chair Wright, and Members of the House Committee on Education,

Re: House Bill 4082 – Summer Learning Support

Chair Neron, Vice Chair Hudson, Vice Chair Wright, and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

Chair Neron, Vice Chair Hudson, Vice Chair Wright, and Members of the House Committee on Education. For the record, my name is William Miller, and I serve as the Executive Director of the NAYA Action Fund. The NAYA Action Fund provides tools to shape public policy, cultivate leadership, and elect's champions for issues impacting Native people. Our vision of systemic change is youth-centered, family-driven, and elder guided. Today, I am honored to provide testimony in support of House Bill 4082, a crucial initiative aimed at bolstering the educational landscape through the establishment of a comprehensive and well-funded Summer Learning program.

HB 4082 holds particular significance for Native communities, as it presents a unique opportunity to strengthen cultural identity and pride among our youth. By increasing knowledge of cultural traditions and practices, summer learning programs can serve as invaluable tools for fostering a deeper connection to one's cultural background. This not only enhances individual well-being but also contributes to the preservation and revitalization of Indigenous cultures.

Native people thrive in group learning environments, making summer camps an ideal setting for educational experiences tailored to our community's needs. These programs not only provide academic enrichment but also facilitate meaningful social interactions that are vital for holistic development. Summer opportunities play a crucial role in preparing older youth for future success. Additionally, through project-based work in fields such as STEAM and Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge practices, students gain hands-on experience and develop critical skills that will serve them throughout their lives.

One of the most significant benefits of summer learning for Native youth is the opportunity to engage in hands-on learning and connect through traditional ways of knowing and doing. Activities such as gardening and cultivation not only teach practical skills but also foster a deep appreciation for the land and the wisdom passed down through generations. These experiences are invaluable in nurturing a sense of stewardship and responsibility toward our natural environment. HB 4082 provides an opportunity to invest in the future of Native communities by prioritizing culturally responsive and enriching summer learning opportunities.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "William Miller", is written over a white background.

William Miller
Executive Director