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## **Act Now to Support Indigenous Schools**

*New York State has consistently underfunded the three schools serving Indigenous students on their own nations for decades*

As part of the historic treaty relationship between the Haudenosaunee and the United States, the US is responsible for providing healthcare and education to Indigenous communities. Unfortunately, these treaties have been repeatedly ignored and broken. This history includes the appalling boarding school era, where the motto, “kill the Indian, save the man” was carried out across the continent. Indigenous communities survived through resilience and determination. Almost every public school building in New York State is owned by the School District in that community, except for three schools on Indigenous Nations – the Onondaga Nation School (Lafayette District), the Tuscarora Nation School (Niagara Wheatfield District) and the St. Regis Mohawk School (Salmon River District).

NYS is responsible for maintaining the buildings which house these three schools. They have been terribly underfunded for decades – leaving them with major facilities problems – crumbling brick walls, poorly functioning heating and cooling systems, dangerously degraded concrete, inadequate security and fire protection and much more. The superintendents of those districts describe them as among “the worst building conditions in NYS.”

New York’s Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan, approved in January 2018, emphasizes fostering equity in education for all students and ensuring that all students succeed and thrive in school no matter who they are, where they live, where they go to school, or where they come from. It specifically mentions historically disadvantaged students.

Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation (NOON) is joining with others across NYS in calling for Governor Kathy Hochul to include \$60 million in the 2022-23 NYS Budget, \$20 million for each of these three schools, plus \$6 million (\$2 million per school) on an annual basis for maintenance and improvements moving forward. We ask people to contact Governor Hochul during December to urge her to include this funding in her Executive budget proposal when she submits it to the legislature in January.

A sample letter is included on the back of this page, we encourage you to customize it. You can find additional information, including a digital copy of the sample letter at [www.peacecouncil.net/FundONS](http://www.peacecouncil.net/FundONS)

### **Contact Information**

Governor Kathy Hochul  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224  
Phone 518-474-8390

(Insert Date)

The Honorable Kathy Hochul  
Governor of New York State  
New York State Capitol Building  
Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Hochul,

I write urging you to include a significant funding increase for Indigenous Schools on Indigenous Lands in your Executive Budget. There are three School Districts in NYS under contract with the NYS Education Department to educate Indigenous students living on their own territories, fulfilling treaty obligations of the Federal Government under 1784 Treaty of Fort Stanwix to provide for the education and health of the Haudenosaunee. The buildings these services are provided in are owned by New York State, and are in a shameful state of disrepair.

I write this letter as a resident of New York State in the spirit of the Two Row Wampum Treaty, the first treaty between the Haudenosaunee and settlers and the basis of all following treaties, in order to set our ship -our side of the treaty- back on course. I urge you to better honor the treaties with our Haudenosaunee neighbors and address the unjust conditions at these schools.

The Onondaga Nation School (Lafayette School District), the Tuscarora Nation School (Niagara Wheatfield School District) and the St. Regis Mohawk School (Salmon River School District) are the schools with significant problems as a result of this lack of funding for maintenance and capital improvements. To address this issue, I ask you to include \$60 million in the 2022-23 NYS Budget, \$20 million for each of these three schools, plus \$6 million (\$2 million per school) on an annual basis for maintenance and improvements moving forward.

These three schools have been terribly underfunded for decades – leaving them with major facilities problems – crumbling brick, poorly functioning heating and cooling systems, dangerously degraded concrete and much more. The superintendents of those districts describe them as among “the worst building conditions in NYS.”

New York’s Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan, approved in January 2018, emphasizes fostering equity in education for all students and ensuring that all students succeed and thrive in school no matter who they are, where they live, where they go to school, or where they come from. It specifically mentions historically disadvantaged students. The current situation clearly violates this commitment.

The current funding stream for these three schools is mixed in with funding for other marginalized students who attend schools for students with disabilities. Those students also deserve adequately-funded schools.

In your first months as Governor you have shown your commitment to addressing inequality and building a state that fairly serves all. This small step is an important way to continue that important work.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Name  
Address

I want to acknowledge that I write from traditional \_\_\_\_\_ Nation territory.