

Date of Hearing: Tuesday, January 11, 2021
To: Members of the Education Finance Committee
From: Karen Guise
Affiliated Organization (grade and high school): Red Lake High School
City of Residence: Red Lake, Minnesota

Boozhoo Karen indizhinikaaz. Hello, I'm Karen Guise, I'm a junior at Red Lake High School. I represent MYC Congressional District 7. I would like to begin with some background information about my beloved community. Red Lake Nation is a very close net and supportive community. As an Indigenous population, we have to work twice as hard as everyone else. As students, we pride ourselves on our graduates and activities like basketball. It's a gigantic deal to graduate! It likely means you have overcome multiple challenges -- avoiding drugs, depression/suicide, getting back on track, teenage pregnancy, etc. And, for many of us, basketball and sports become a life-line and the thought of it being canceled would have a drastic effect on the student body.

In my experience, distance learning has had many flaws that impacted its ability to work efficiently. First, it separates everyone. Therefore it's harder to get individual help. At my school particularly our advisory classes work as a unit. We don't leave anybody behind, we help each other to understand the material and even use peer pressure to help them get an assignment done.

It isn't as if we have less to do now either. In fact, the student's responsibilities have tripled. I personally become a nanny, chef, teacher, and parent overnight. I have to watch my 3 younger brothers, cook breakfast and lunch, help them with their school work, tutor other students while maintaining my perfect straight-A record. I know the students I tutor and if we were in person they wouldn't need the extra support. As for me the only reason why I'm still trying with school is because of my grades. I worked too hard to give up now.

Another reason distance learning has been a struggle for my community is that it feels very optional. You go to school by opening a laptop. It's so easy to open it and feel overwhelmed by a bunch of assignments. Discipline is not the problem, it's the fact that many students do assignments to get them done and not to learn. We're in a survival mood 24/7. We do things last minute because we feel like we have "time". We're home all day and night. Our natural stress doesn't kick in until it's almost due. It's a perfect situation for procrastination to thrive.

Lastly, I want to talk about memories, specifically high school memories. What do you remember from your high school days? Random happy moments with a couple of bad mixed in. What do I remember about my high school experience? Sadly not much. I know in the future my high school experience will be a blur of negative emotions. I'll just remember crying a lot and being overwhelmed because I felt like a complete failure. If I'm honest, I still do feel like a failure.

Why do I feel like a failure? When I'm getting the grades I want, helping others, doing amazing with my multiple new responsibilities. I'm not having fun for one. I'm stressed 24/7. The biggest reason is the future. I know a handful of seniors who are not going to graduate this year. It breaks my heart especially because I saw how hard they worked to get back on track during

their sophomore and junior years. The worst part is I can't help them. I can't even help my friends. I'm barely surviving myself. I feel like a complete failure because I can't help those who helped me. I just want to thank you for listening and as you make decisions for funding, please consider the impact on my community.