

TESTIMONY BY JOEL FRIESZ

IN SUPPORT OF HB 1488

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2021

Chairman Weisz and House Human Services Committee Members. Please accept this as written testimony in support of the creation of the truth, healing, and reconciliation commission; provide for a legislative management report; and to provide an expiration date.

Through my work in the field of Restorative Justice and victim services over the past 16 years in North Dakota, I have become familiar with the impacts of historical and intergenerational trauma in tribal communities. Beginning in 2013, I have been involved with youth programming in North Dakota that is focused specifically on addressing the overrepresentation of minority youth in the ND juvenile justice system. This overrepresentation is referred to as Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) and impacts youth and families in our state. In 2016 I was part of a cohort from Cass and Burleigh Counties that completed the Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the Juvenile Justice System Certificate Program at Georgetown University in Washington, DC. As part of this certificate program we studied concepts that negatively impact youth and push them into the justice system. Historical and intergenerational trauma in tribal communities is one of the factors that was highlighted as an important element to understand to improve outcomes for youth. One of the main reasons I support this bill is because we will have better ability to improve outcomes for youth and families if we study concepts such as historical and intergenerational trauma. As a state that is home to numerous tribal communities, it is critical that we understand these concepts to equip ourselves with the information we need to recognize, identify, and remove adversities and barriers for current and future generations.

As part of a national Restorative Justice association in which I serve on the Executive Team, we utilize some of the following language to highlight the importance of giving attention to truth, healing and reconciliation processes:

- We recognize that experiences of trans-generational historical harm in the American experience are deep, affecting the lived experience of people, groups, communities, institutions and systems. Historical harm continues to affect all people, especially communities of color.
- Historical harm lives both in the past and the present as it shapes how all people and groups respond to harm and conflict through their participation, perpetration, victimization, tolerance and/or inaction. We advocate that deep healing and genuine change can only emerge through recognition, acknowledgement and repair of the current trauma that results from unaddressed historical harm.
- Unaddressed and unhealed historical harm is a root factor underlying most social problems that confront us today (e.g., crime, victimization, mass incarceration, poverty, racism, ethnocentrism, gender bias, homophobia, and social injustice).

Thank you for the opportunity to share this information with you. I am happy to answer any questions or provide additional information.

Joel Friesz

Email: joelfriesz@outlook.com

Phone: 701-799-0387

Fargo, ND