

Education Committee
February 1, 2021

Testimony on SB 2304

Hello, Good afternoon, members of the Education Committee.

Thank you - I am grateful to share this space with you on the ancestral lands of my relatives: the Anishnaube, Metis, Oceti Sakowin, and Sisseton peoples, otherwise known as Grand Forks.

I would first like to apologize to any of my elders that maybe listening – I wish to speak from the heart and in a good way. I was raised to always defer to my elders because they hold knowledge and wisdom that only comes with life experience.

My name is Courtney Davis Souvannasacd and I am an enrolled member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa. Today, I speaking in support of Senate Bill 2304 requiring all elementary and secondary public and nonpublic schools in the state to include curriculum on Native American history.

As the former Native American Liaison of the Grand Forks Public School district, I previously worked with students and their families along with school administration, program directors, social workers, counselors, resource officers, teachers and educational specialists to address Native American students' needs.

Additionally, I serve on the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction State Superintendent's Family Engagement Cabinet, as well as, the Grand Forks Public School District Superintendent's Diversity, Equity, & Inclusivity committee where we collaborated on strategic goals and objectives to serve our district staff, and students. These opportunities have cultivated positive change while developing partnerships and this transformative work could be duplicated through the state.

North Dakota has made progress but there is always opportunity for growth. All North Dakota students deserve an education that is representative, both historically and contemporary, and educators deserve to have that curriculum within reach.

This effort creates a new path for our North Dakota schools to engage community, build and strengthen relationships that are meaningful, as well as respectful, through teaching and learning.

That concludes my testimony. I will stay on for questions if appropriate.