

WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF TO HB 1535

Date of Hearing: March 27, 2025

Erin J. Belgarde, 807 John Street, Rolette, ND 58366

Committee chair and members of the committee, my name is Erin Belgarde and I have worked for the Turtle Mountain Band of Indian Reservation in Belcourt North Dakota for 16.5 years. I am speaking today in support of House Bill 1535. As a proud indigenous Female, I know how crucial it is to pass this bill.

For decades, Native American and Alaska Native communities have struggled with high rates of assault, abduction, and murder of tribal members. Unfortunately, not all crimes are reported but still the statistics are high for MMIW.

- Nationally, Native Woman are more than twice as likely to be raped or sexually abused assaulted than any other group of females.
- On some reservations, the rate of homicide among Native Women exceeds the National Average by more than tenfold.
- Nearly one in three Native American Women will experience rape or attempted rape in their lifetime.

These statistics are alarming. My entire life I have had to look behind me to make sure no one was following me, leave elevators that only carried myself and a male, ask people to follow me to my car in the parking lot. The threat has always been there. Please help us add resources to the threat.

Please support HB 1535

Respectfully, Erin J. Belgarde, 807 John Street, Rolette, ND 58366