

Testimony of Representative Lisa Finley-DeVille

In support of House bill 1199

Chairman Wobbema and members of the Senate Workforce Development committee, my name is Representative Lisa Finley-DeVille, representing District 4 A, which includes the MHA Nation. I testify in support for of House Bill 1199, relating to the establishment of the Missing Indigenous People Task Force. This bill is an important measure in addressing the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous people, not only in North Dakota but also across the nation.

The creation of a local, dedicated task force is an essential component of ensuring that we have a coordinated and focused effort to address the specific challenges faced by Indigenous communities when it comes to reporting and recovering missing individuals. Indigenous people face unique barriers to reaching justice, including jurisdictional challenges, lack of interagency coordination, and cultural misunderstandings. This bill aims to remove those barriers and ensure that law enforcement agencies, tribes, and organizations can collaborate effectively.

The task force will identify and address the jurisdictional issues that prevent effective cooperation between federal, state, local, and tribal agencies. This will streamline investigations and improve outcomes for missing persons cases.

We must also understand why this is such a critical issue in North Dakota's Native communities. By tracking the number of missing Indigenous people and their recovery, the bill will provide essential data that will guide future policies and resource allocation. This data will help us understand the characteristics of missing Indigenous individuals and the underlying causes, allowing us to target solutions more effectively.

By approving this bill, we send a clear message to North Dakota's tribal nations that their safety and well-being matter. It is an acknowledgment that the historical and ongoing challenges faced by Indigenous people require targeted and thoughtful action. We must work together to protect vulnerable populations, and this bill provides the framework to do just that.

I urge you to give House Bill 1199 a do pass and help create a future where no Indigenous person is left behind, and no family is forced to endure the pain of a missing loved one without the support and resources they need.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

