

TO: Chairman Weisz, Vice Chairwoman Rohr,  
and members of the ND House Human Services Committee,

My name is Joe A. Larson, and I serve as pastor of St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Fargo, ND.

I am writing to urge your approval of HB 1488 to establish a Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Commission within the state of North Dakota.

As a religious leader, I am aware of the long history of discrimination and oppression of Indigenous People within our state. Oftentimes, the Church has been complicit in a variety of ways in supporting governmental policies that removed children from their families and tribes, restricted Native American cultural and religious practices, and promoted racism against their people.

Countries like South Africa have demonstrated the need and healing potential of their Truth and Reconciliation Commission in response to their long history of apartheid. Witnesses who were identified as victims of gross human rights violations were invited to give statements about their experiences as a way to educate the public about the long-term effects of racism. A similar process has been used in other states in our country to help communities and states deal with our history.

As a pastor, I see the potential for Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Commission to bring restorative justice, healing and reconciliation. I believe God calls us "do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God." (Micah 6:8)

I ask you to issue a "Do Pass" for HB 1488.

Sincerely,

Rev. Joe A. Larson  
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