

Government and Veterans Affairs Committee

ATTN: Shawn Vedaa, Chair
Scott Meyer, Vice Chair
Mark Weber
Jay Elkin
Kristen Roers
Richard Marcellais
Michael Wobbema

RE: Written Testimony on Senate Bill 2316

Boozhoo, Hello, Good afternoon, Chairman Vedaa and members of the Government and Veterans Affairs Committee.

For the purpose of this letter, please note I use the following terms: First Nations, American Indian, Native American, and Indigenous, interchangeably. The rich history of the United States and Tribal Nations is inherently complex and I humbly recognize an individual's choice to how they identify. For example, within the U.S. Treaties with my people, we are identified as "Chippewa" which I use, in addition to Anishnaube which means the "Original People."

That that context, my name is Courtney Davis Souvannasacd and I am an enrolled member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa. Today, I am writing in support of Senate Bill 2316 to recognize the second Monday in October as "First Nations Day". As a life-long North Dakotan, I have engaged in several efforts to encourage inclusive communities and come to you in a good way.

One endeavor includes the Grand Forks City Council's recognition of the second Monday of October as Indigenous Peoples Day in July 2019. The resolution has been a significant step in building a stronger relationship with the American Indian community. At the time of the Grand Forks City resolution adoption, more than 122 cities and municipalities, three counties, two school districts, nine colleges and universities, and seven states had chosen to celebrate Indigenous Peoples Day. Shortly after, the University of North Dakota and Grand Forks Public School District have added IPD to their academic calendars.

These efforts have unified the Grand Forks community and has reaffirmed its commitment to celebrate, promote understanding, recognition, and respect for the contributions Indigenous People have made in building the Greater Grand Forks area - the traditional lands of the Anishnaube, Metis, Oceti Sakowin, and Sisseton people.

North Dakota has the same opportunity to champion understanding and solidarity by amending the Century Code to recognize the second Monday as "First Nations Day." By doing so, this amendment will unify North Dakota City and Tribal efforts across the state and directly contribute to making North Dakota Legendary.

Chairman Vedaa, and members of the Government and Veterans Affairs committee, I urge a DO pass on Senate Bill 2316.

Miigwech, Thank you,
Courtney Davis Souvannasacd