

(Greeting in traditional language)

Greetings, it is good to see you all.

My name is butterfly woman, my English name is Melanie Moniz. I am Nueta, Hidatsa, and Sahnish and I've come today with a good heart. I am a descendant of Paints Up, Woman Goes Out, and Bears Ghost, my people, the Nueta (or as many of you have come to learn the Mandan) once lived in village's throughout this region and we are still here today, we have lived here for thousands of years.

Chairman Vedaa and members of the committee

I am here today in support of SB 2316.

I wear many hats as most of us do, today I am here as an Indigenous woman, a mother, an advocate, and a constituent of district 30.

In 1977 at the International Conference on Discrimination Against Indigenous Populations in the Americas an idea to celebrate Indigenous People's Day in lieu of Columbus Day was born. Many people, both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous alike worked very hard to make that idea a reality. In 1990 South Dakota became the first state to celebrate and recognize Indigenous people. In the years following other neighbor states such as Montana and Minnesota followed.

Tribal Nations, Tribal Colleges, a growing number of states and cities, three of which are right here in North Dakota, and Indigenous people throughout our nation all celebrate, observe, and recognize Indigenous people on the second Monday of October.

The idea to shift away from celebrating a false narrative that negatively impacts Indigenous people has proven to be healing for Indigenous people and positively impacts every community by building bridges and filling gaps.

The health and well-being of our children and all children is always at the center of our decisions as they are impacted by our actions. Watching my children participate in an Indigenous People's Day celebration was such a joy every mother wants for their children. The prayer, ceremony, and celebrations of people who look like them empowered them, so much so that it has led me here to you today.

Consistency is so important; we would not celebrate Christmas Day on a separate day from the rest of the nation and we should not celebrate Indigenous people on a separate day either.

Chairman Vedaa and members of the commission 2020 has taught us so many things and has shown that we must work to fill gaps and come together. Move North Dakota forward and vote yes on SB 2316.

Thank you for your public service. I will stand for questions.

Melanie Moniz