



North Dakota Native Vote
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Statement of Sharnell Seaboy regarding HB 1491
Field Organizer at North Dakota Native Vote
January 30, 2023
House Education Committee

Mr. Chairman and members of the House Education Committee, my name is Sharnell Seaboy. I am an enrolled citizen of the Mni Wakan Oyate (Spirit Lake Nation) and I am a Field Organizer at North Dakota Native Vote. We are here to testify in support of HB 1491.

North Dakota Native Vote is a non-partisan grassroots organization. Our mission is to create and affect policy to promote equitable representation for the Native people of North Dakota.

We have three key points that we would like to address with the committee today:

- First, we are all experiencing the impacts of today's inflation rate and the rising cost of living. In some of our communities in North Dakota, the wages are not keeping up and are contributing to more families struggling to make ends meet. Many of these families are those who do not currently qualify for free and reduced meals. Eliminating that barrier is a good thing for all families.
- Second, the schools have our children for up to 7 hours per day. During a school day there are two meal times. We feel that having a nutritious meal that students can depend on promotes learning. Many students come from working families and sometimes their best meal of the day is at school.
- Finally, providing free meals to all public school students could be a win for school retention and a win for parents trusting the school lunch system. By passing this bill, there can be opportunities for farm to school food cooperation to provide locally grown food to students.

Regardless of income, North Dakota Native Vote believes that making sure every student has a nutritious meal at school is the right thing to do. Therefore, North Dakota Native Vote recommends a DO PASS on HB 1491.

Pidamiya-ye (Thank you).