

House Bill. 1536
Human Service Committee
Testimony Presented by
Rebecca Grey Bull, ICWA Director
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe
January 23, 2023

Good morning, Mr. Chairperson, and members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

My name is Rebecca Grey Bull, I am the Indian Child Welfare Director for the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. I come before you today in my personal and professional capacity in support of House Bill 1536.

I have been the ICWA representative for the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe since 2016, since that time, I have worked earnestly and energetically with and alongside my North Dakota state and tribal counterparts to build a healthy rapport and harmoniously work toward accurately implementing ICWA and addressing the disproportionality of Native American children in foster care. ICWA provides a workable and flexible framework to ensure and support tribal jurisdiction and tribal involvement in matters regarding our children. Which, at ICWA's inception in 1978, Congress deemed to be the most vital resource toward the continued existence and integrity of tribes. House Bill 1536, amongst many other milestones, including the ICWA Family Preservationist program, is the culmination of seven years of intentional and targeted efforts at decreasing the disproportionality of Native American children in foster care and improving outcomes for Native American families. House Bill 1536 will ensure and solidify North Dakota's commitment toward demonstrating that when ICWA is implemented accurately and when tribes and states work together, legitimate, and impactful changes occur. As stated by one of my cohorts, Ms. Bercier, ICWA has been deemed the golden standard for child welfare nationwide and North Dakota has recently been hailed as a trailblazer in ICWA implementation and creating positive change, partly because of the North Dakota's ICWA Implementation Partnership Grant, but also because of the strengthened relationships, as a result, and the commitments of each and every one of us to follow Chief Sittings Bull's advice of putting our minds together and seeing what we can build for our children. I humbly ask you all to put your minds with ours and join us in supporting House Bill 1536.

I extend my thank you and the thank you of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe community to this committee and to the entire Sixty-Eighth legislative assembly for your support of ICWA and your commitment to prioritizing the improvement of child welfare outcomes for Native American youth in North Dakota.

I will stand for questions.

Rebecca Grey Bull
ICWA Director
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe