

Good morning, Chairperson and members of the Committee. My name is Brianna Iron Road and I am here in support of HB1537. As the Director of Community Outreach at the Sacred Pipe Resource Center, a nonprofit organization serving the Native American population in Bismarck-Mandan-Lincoln, I work directly with one of the affected groups covered under this bill. We at SPRC offer support and services to the victims of incidences that **should** have the protection of this bill, as well as those who should be represented through the data collected upon passage and implementation.

Members of the committee, we hope you will be able to recognize the value of this bill in protecting the most vulnerable of your constituents. Imagine being the victim of a crime simply for being **who you are**. You may have heard stories of racial slurs being hurled at individuals, conflicts for speaking our languages, and crimes committed against our Indigenous peoples. These actions are deeply embedded through historic racism, disposition, and violence. The major difference between what was and what will be after the passage of bills such as House Bill No. 1537 is that our laws will now cover the underlying reasons for these crimes such as hate, racism, homophobia, and more that **your** constituents face every day.

Just this last week, Native and Black student athletes had cruel slurs and taunts aimed at them. No officials or administration came to their aid. Parents had to report the problem to officials and have no assurances the matter will be dealt with. It is every day in our communities that slurs, insults, and physical harm based on nothing more than who they are that impacts our constituents. These before mentioned crimes can be classified as murder, bullying, harassment, and other heinous crimes but these are only the stories we here about yet countless go unheard. The true nature of these crimes is that at its core, crimes are rooted

in hate, animosity, and an unwillingness to learn or change. The laws and systems created to run our country and states come from a system created by indigenous peoples. Yet these systems created by our ancestors are not being used to protect our indigenous peoples from harm when the crimes themselves are a result of bias.

Reports compiled under the compliance of the amended subsection two will allow organizations such as ours to correctly assess and create proactive and reactive measures to support victims of these crimes. This will also allow organizations much like our own to create a system to help minimize these types of crimes through outreach programs and learning opportunities within the community. By defining what bias is in the context of House Bill No. 1537, officers and public officials will be more equipped to open dialogues between their respected positions and members of their community which go unheard and are underrepresented. The definition of bias itself follows similar wording outlined by other government entities, which if necessary to be enacted at a federal level should be enacted to protect our state's citizens as well. The overall goal of data collection would do a tremendous amount of good for the constituency that House Bill No. 1537 aims help.

As for the enactment of these amendments, this will allow law enforcement officers to more clearly define crimes that often don't have a set label. This allows both the justice system and families to seek other atonements for crimes such as restorative justice rather than charging individuals outright for something that is a biased or learned behavior. House Bill No. 1537 will allow those who are victims of these crimes to be given justice while allowing offenders the ability to learn and grow from biases they carry rather than commit future crimes. As a result of this change, the diverse people of North Dakota will feel safer which will

lead to an even stronger community. In short, laws like this will convince your constituents that North Dakota is safe for them and you as elected officials want to see your communities thrive. The Scared Pipe Resource Center is calling directly on **you**, the elected officials of North Dakota, to show us your commitment to the Indigenous population, and by extension all under represented peoples, by passing the House Bill 1537. Vote yes with the people of North Dakota's safety in mind.