

House Bill 1385

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House Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Representative Todd Porter Committee Chairman

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Chairman Porter and members of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, I have had the great pleasure of testifying before various North Dakota legislatures through the years as April Walker a Water Resources Engineer working on the development of projects such as the FM Diversion. Today I wish to introduce myself with my spirit name. Ozhaawashkozi Binesi ndizhinikaaz. I am called Blue Thunderbird.

I appear here today to provide testimony in support of House Bill 1385, which pertains to allowing the Department of Water Resources (DWR) to cooperate and coordinate with federally recognized Indian tribes.

I am a tribal member who has had the unique perspective of assisting in the development of major water projects in the state and on the development of water policy at multiple government levels. This policy development covered compelling topics such as special assessments for water infrastructure, stormwater pollution prevention, and flood risk reduction. Throughout my career I have learned the importance of engaging stakeholders and bringing multidimensional perspectives to the table to work through complex problems. It can

be the difference between having a solution to a problem and having an implementable solution to a problem.

As you heard in Chairman Azure's testimony, there have been significant state investments made in projects that could have provided broader benefits, had the projects been inclusive of tribal perspectives. The addition of language that allows the DWR the opportunity to work with Tribes makes room for better solutions. As an engineer I understand that cooperation can eliminate the need for duplicative infrastructure. It just makes sense to eliminate any barriers to common sense, mutually beneficial solutions. I hope you will approve the proposed addition of Federally Recognized Indian Tribes as entities that DWR can cooperate with.

Miigwetch (Thank you) for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 1358.