



521 E Main Avenue
Suite 320
Bismarck, ND 58501

Phone 701.255.6240
Toll Free 888.255.6240
Fax 701.255.1904

cawsnorthdakota.org
contact@cawsnorthdakota.org



House Bill No. 1473
Senate Human Services Committee
Testimony Presented by Seth O'Neill, JD, MSW
Email: soneill@cawsnorthdakota.org
March 20, 2023

Chairwoman Larson and members of the Committee, my name is Seth O'Neill and I am representing CAWS North Dakota in support of HB 1473. Our organizations work with children and families across North Dakota. We support HB 1473 because we believe it would support and protect Native American families in our state.

This bill would incorporate the placement preferences from the Indian Child Welfare Act into the North Dakota Century Code. The Indian Child Welfare Act is a landmark piece of legislation to protect Native families in the child welfare system. The placement preferences ensure that a Native American child is placed with a member of their family or a member of the child's tribe before being placed in other settings. In 2022, Native American children made up 48% of children in foster care.¹ This is true despite Native American children being only 9% of children in North Dakota. These placement preferences ensure that children who are removed from their parents are placed in culturally appropriate settings for foster care and adoption.

This bill would also provide for a study regarding incorporating other sections of the Indian Child Welfare Act into the North Dakota Century Code which is important.

Due to these reasons, I ask that you recommend a "Do-Pass" on HB 1473. I appreciate your time and I am happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

¹ See [Testimony of Cory Pederson](#).