House Bill No. 1536
Senate Human Service Committee

Testimony Presented by

Harmony Bercier

03/21/2023

Dear Chairperson Lee and Senate Human Service Committee members,

I am respectfully writing in support of the passage of HB 1536. North Dakota was the recipient of a 5 year multi-million dollar federal grant aimed at improving the accurate implementation of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). Many tribal and state stakeholders from many agencies and sectors have contributed to this collaborative work. Because of this amazing team work, North Dakota is now seen as a leader in ICWA implementation. Furthermore, the state has experienced a 4.6% reduction of Native American children in the state foster care system over the last five years.

All grant objectives and initiatives focused on how tribal and state partners can work together to create better outcomes by better upholding the letter and the spirit of ICWA. These initiatives included developing new trainings for both state and tribal partners, user friendly website, co-developed forms and processes, better communication, relationships and collaboration within and between agencies, and the multi-agency development of a program that supports meaningful tribal inclusion in the implementation of the Indian Child Welfare Act: the ICWA Family Preservation Program.

Collaborative grant work is where the existing ND Century Code language relative to ICWA started. North Dakota strives to embrace and exceed best practices in child welfare and ICWA is best practice. Grant partners will be gathering soon to being discussing applying for the next round of federal funding to continue the great work that has been done here in North Dakota. Supporting this legislation further displays North Dakota's commitment to superior service for all families.

If you have any questions about this proposed piece of legislation or all the work that has been done here to support this best practice in our state, please feel free to reach out.

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Harmony Bercier Digitally signed by Harmony Bercier Date: 2023.03.21 14:00:09 -05'00'

ND ICWA Partnership Grant Manager - UND/NATI