

House Bill No. 1536

Senate Human Service Committee

Testimony Presented by

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I am writing in full support of House Bill 1536. As an advocate for ICWA, especially in the last 4 years I have seen its protections produce the intended outcomes that the letter and spirit of the law call for to preserve families. ICWA was enacted to protect Native American families but it can and should be a family preservation model for all families, it is best practice. However in stating that, in order to be recognized as that it must have the protections in place to be practiced as such. We have come a long way regarding ICWA in our state but there is still much work to be done. Passing this bill is a step in the right direction of honoring the law that specifies what is best for Native American children and families. We should not have to sacrifice cultural connections with an out of home placement. The trauma of removal is intensified when children are placed into completely unfamiliar living situations. Permanency is so important for a length of time in a child's life but culture is identity and that is lifelong. We have the opportunity to do better by passing bills such as 1536. I hope you will join me in supporting the further protections of ICWA in our State as well as continue progress to see the state of North Dakota recognized as a national model for practicing ICWA law as intended.