

Testimony of Representative Finley-DeVille

In support of House Bill 1536

Chairman Heinert and members of the House Education Committee, my name is Representative Lisa Finley-DeVille. I represent District 4A, which includes, MHA Nation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, as a cosponsor I thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of HB 1536, which appropriates funding to the Department of Public Instruction for the development and implementation of a Native American history curriculum in North Dakota's K-12 education system. This initiative is critical to ensuring that students across the state receive a comprehensive, accurate, and culturally relevant understanding of Native American history, culture, and contributions.

As a life-long learner, I believe that this bill represents a critical step toward fostering greater understanding and respect for the history, culture, and contributions of Native American communities, which will strengthen relationships across the state.

The bill's allocation of \$1.5 million for curriculum development, teacher training, and procurement of educational materials is a strategic investment in the future of our students and communities. By involving tribal leaders and cultural experts in the creation of the curriculum, this initiative will ensure that it is both accurate and culturally relevant.

Importantly, this curriculum will not only benefit Native American students but will also help non-Native students better understand and appreciate the rich cultural heritage of North Dakota's tribes. This understanding will serve as a bridge, building stronger, more respectful relationships between the state's diverse groups and creating a more unified community.

In addition, HB 1536's provisions for oversight and support ensure that the curriculum will be implemented effectively across all schools in the state, with particular attention to rural and underfunded areas. The establishment of a Native American Curriculum Advisory Committee will aid in ensuring that the curriculum is continuously reviewed and updated to maintain accuracy and relevance.

HB 1536 is a historic opportunity to strengthen the relationship between North Dakota's Native American communities and the broader population. It represents a commitment to reconciliation, understanding, and the shared goal of building a more inclusive future for all learners.

I ask that you give House Bill 1536 a do pass recommendation. Thank you for your time and consideration of this important issue.