



North Dakota Native Vote
919 S 7th Street
Suite 603
Bismarck, ND 58504

February 11, 2025

Testimony of Erika Red Tomahawk,
Tribal-State Policy Coordinator, North Dakota Native Vote
In Support for HB 1536

Dear Chairman Heinert, Vice-Chairman Schreiber-Beck, and members of the Education Committee,

My name is Erika Red Tomahawk, and I am writing on behalf of North Dakota Native Vote, an organization founded in 2018 with the mission of counteracting the systematic disparities that have long plagued Native American communities in North Dakota. Our work is centered on empowering our communities, amplifying our voices, and addressing the inequalities we continue to face.

For far too long, Native American communities - both on and off-reservation - have been subjected to discrimination, marginalization, and unethical treatment. These behaviors are not a result of our own actions or choices; rather, they stem from a lack of education - specifically, a lack of understanding about the local tribes, cultures, and social presence that have existed long before the founding of North Dakota as a state.

We have been here for centuries, long before the borders of this state were drawn, and yet we continue to face the same challenges and injustices. It is disheartening to see that the deep-rooted misconceptions about Native Americans still persist, perpetuated by a lack of awareness and understanding. This lack of knowledge continues to fuel discrimination and perpetuate negative stereotypes.

This is why HB 1536 - a bill that seeks to implement a Native American history curriculum in K-12 public schools - is an essential step forward. The inclusion of a Native American history curriculum will not only serve to educate students on the rich history, culture, and contributions of Native American communities, but will also foster an environment of inclusion, respect, and understanding. By equipping the next generation with knowledge about our shared history, we can work to eradicate the harmful biases that have persisted for far too long.

The benefits of such a curriculum are manifold:

- Cultural Awareness and Respect
- Empowerment and Pride
- Building an Inclusive Society
- Addressing Systemic Inequalities
- Improving Community Relationships



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An accurate representation of Native American history in our schools will do more than just inform students - it will actively shape a more inclusive, equitable, and informed society. It will empower future generations to understand and respect the rich diversity that exists within our state, and help ensure that the painful history of marginalization and exclusion does not continue to be repeated.

In closing, I strongly urge the Education Committee to support **HB 1536**, by giving it a **“Do Pass” recommendation**. By doing so, you are taking a step toward a more inclusive and just North Dakota - one where Native American history is acknowledged, celebrated, and taught to all students.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kind regards,
Erika Red Tomahawk