

Good Afternoon, Chairman Schauer and members of the GVA Committee,

For the record, my name is Dawson Holle and I'm honored to represent the great people of District 31. Today, I'm introducing HB1199, a bill that would create a Missing Indigenous Persons (MIP) Task Force in North Dakota. This bill addresses a growing crisis that demands our immediate action.

The statistics are startling: Indigenous communities in North Dakota are disproportionately impacted by violence and disappearance. According to the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), over 9,500 Indigenous persons were reported missing nationwide in 2020, many of which remain unresolved. In North Dakota, this crisis is especially severe. Indigenous women are murdered at more than 10 times the national average, as reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (CDC, 2021). The gap between the gravity of this crisis and the response it has received thus far is unacceptable.

The challenge is compounded by the geographic isolation of many Indigenous communities in North Dakota. The remoteness of these communities, coupled with limited resources and inconsistent law enforcement responses, means that cases often go unsolved or are delayed. Families are left without answers, and vital investigations stall because of jurisdictional complexities and lack of communication between tribal, state, and federal agencies.

HB1199 presents a targeted, solution-oriented approach to address these challenges head-on:

1. **Centralized Data System:** The first step in solving any problem is understanding it. By creating a unified data system to track MIP cases across tribal, state, and federal jurisdictions, the task force will address the current fragmentation in data collection. This system will allow real-time tracking, ensuring that no case goes unnoticed or unresolved.
2. **Improved Collaboration Across Agencies:** Jurisdictional barriers between tribal nations, local law enforcement, and state agencies are one of the main reasons cases remain unsolved. The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) highlights this issue in their 2018 report, pointing out that coordination between agencies is key to resolving these cases effectively. HB1199 will mandate streamlined communication and collaboration to ensure that investigations are handled swiftly and efficiently, without unnecessary delays.
3. **Culturally Relevant Solutions:** Indigenous communities face unique cultural and legal needs that must be respected in any response to MIP cases. The Indian Law Resource Center emphasizes the importance of including Indigenous leaders in shaping policy, to ensure that any intervention is not only effective but also respectful of tribal values and traditions. The task force will include Indigenous voices at every level, ensuring culturally informed solutions.
4. **Public Awareness and Education:** Raising public awareness is critical to addressing the MIP crisis. According to a 2018 study by the Urban Indian Health Institute, many cases go unreported or under-reported, largely due to lack of awareness about the scale of the issue. The task force will lead comprehensive public awareness campaigns to educate the public, as well as provide training for law enforcement on the specific challenges facing Indigenous communities.

North Dakota has a clear opportunity to lead the way in tackling this crisis. The long-term benefits of HB1199 are clear: faster case resolution, improved trust between law enforcement and Indigenous communities, and reduced crime. More importantly, the task force will restore justice and dignity to families who have long been denied answers.

The cost of inaction is unacceptable—not only are lives being lost, but the erosion of trust between North Dakota’s Indigenous communities and law enforcement continues to deepen. This is not just about solving one missing person case; it is about transforming how we respond to this crisis at a systemic level.

I urge the committee to support HB1199. Together, we can take the necessary steps to protect Indigenous people across North Dakota and ensure justice for every family.

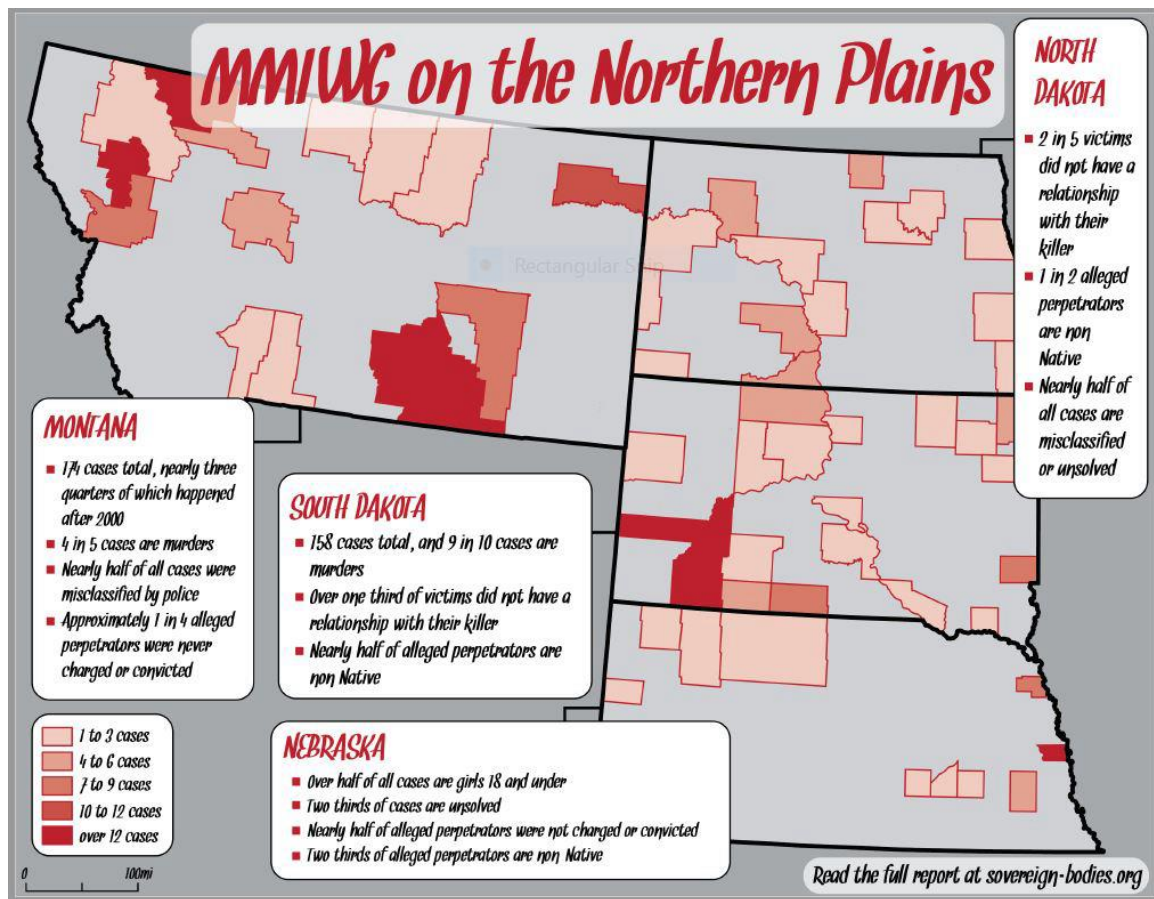
Thank you for your time and consideration.

I do have some amendments to HB 1199

My first change would be on page 4 line 3 “The Attorney General shall serve as chairman or appoint someone to serve in his absence”

24 Missing Indigenous people are missing according to the North Dakota Missing Person.org

However, only two tribes were mentioned so I believe the number is higher.



References:

- National Crime Information Center (NCIC). (2020). "Missing Indigenous Persons Statistics." Retrieved from <https://www.fbi.gov>.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2021). "Homicide Rates and Indigenous Populations." Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov>.
- Government Accountability Office (GAO). (2020). "Barriers to Reporting and Investigating Missing Indigenous Persons." Retrieved from <https://www.gao.gov>.
- National Institute of Justice (NIJ). (2018). "Jurisdictional Challenges in Missing Persons Investigations." Retrieved from <https://nij.ojp.gov>.
- Indian Law Resource Center. "Legal Challenges Facing Indigenous Communities in North America." Retrieved from <https://indianlaw.org>.
- Urban Indian Health Institute. (2018). "National Report on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women." Retrieved from <https://www.uihi.org>.