

Good morning,

First, please allow me to apologize for the last minute submission. My family and I found out about this hearing late Sunday morning and honestly I have never found myself presenting before such a large audience of very powerful individuals.

Powerful individuals, that is a good place to start. You all have the power to make changes happen and changes are exactly what my family has been fighting for with child welfare in Indian country for well over a year. (Probably not politically correct, but I assure you I am Native American and my view of the reservation and the programs therein as such, Indian country). On the reservation there are individuals granted very powerful positions just like you ladies and gentlemen. However, unlike our wonderful local, state and federal government, there are no checks and balances. There is no one there to stop someone from violating rights, from committing fraud and there is no one there to investigate when these things happen. All of this and more has happened in the case of my niece and my sister. A woman who was given a position of authority over the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa child welfare program used her power to stop the adoption of my niece by my sister. This director of child welfare was angry and vengeful because my sister had the audacity to point out the flaws of the program. The director wrote her own complaint of abuse after the state's investigator found no evidence of abuse. The director lied to the FBI in an attempt to have my niece removed from my sister's care. This director has violated the rights of many children and families out of spite. Please take the time to read testimony and to consider these families before giving tribal CPS programs any more power or authority. Clearly, these people have too much power and will use it in any way that suits his or her own agenda.

Giving any native american ran child welfare program more power would be detrimental to all native families and children. There are numerous cases and many families that have been destroyed by tribal cps programs because there is no one there who has the education, the licensure or the training to be in the positions they are in and worse more there is no one there to ensure these people are doing what is in the child's best interest. Children in the system are just added numbers for federal funding. The more children the more money. There has even been a case of embezzlement in the Turtle Mountain tribal CPS, but you won't hear about that because the guilty party was the Chairman's aunt. Children are removed from loving homes such as my sister's and given to poverty stricken individuals who have made fostering children a career for the money. The Indian Child Welfare Act did nothing for our native children except condemn them to a life of poverty and struggle.

Many of you have no idea what the reservation is like nor do you have any idea of the tribal government. Just for an example of how people are put into place in the tribal government; think of Biden vs Trump for President. Now, if over 50% of the United States was Biden's relation in one way or another, do you believe that Trump would be our President right now? This is politics on the reservation. People who are related to the majority of the voting members are who win, not individuals who care, not individuals who want to do better for the people. When these individuals such as the chairman, Jamie Azure, get into office they appoint people to high positions in the tribe. Individuals who have no training, no education or very little and who do not have the intellect required to run such positions. When situations arise these people do not make changes and they do not admit there were mistakes; instead they fight change, hide the evidence and protect their pride and ego.

Like many of you, Mr. Azure took an oath to do what is best for the people, but I assure you his intentions are more directed towards what is best for his family and himself.

The State of North Dakota needs to redeem and utilize its ability to step in and be the savior for the Native American children. When tribal CPS fails our children they should not be awarded more power. My sister waited 6 long months for the adoption to be finalized for a child that she took in at birth. A child that was left at the hospital after birth because her drug addicted mother did not care. This same mother has done this more than once. No family stepped up, no family member could take in this beautiful baby because the grandmother was already raising all the other grandchildren. My sister's story is tragic but it is reality. Please take the time to hear her testimony and really look into what has been done to her and my niece. Help us fight the tribal CPS programs by not granting them more power. Do not allow them to continue to abuse their power, violate the rights of families and children and do not give them the power to make it that much easier to do.

The State of North Dakota needs to force the tribes in hiring and appointing only educated, licensed and appropriate staff to such high positions. There is no reason our tribe should have individuals with only high school diplomas working as CPS case workers. This is where the State CPS should step in and take over. This is where the State of North Dakota is needed. Our children deserve better.

Again, I must apologize. I literally had 45 minutes to write this statement and to get it submitted. I would love to testify to all of you in person, and perhaps someday I will. There is so much more that needs to be said and there is so much more the world needs to know.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my statement. I can only pray that I made a difference.

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