



North Dakota House of Representatives

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COMMITTEES:

Human Services
Political Subdivisions

February 4, 2025

Good Morning Chairman Klemin, Vice Chair Karls, Vice Chair Vetter, and Members of the Committee;

For the record, my name is Jayme Davis, and I am a Representative from District 9, which encompasses two Tribal Nations—the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, where I am an enrolled member, and the Spirit Lake Nation. District 9 also includes the beautiful Peace Gardens.

Thank you for the opportunity to introduce House Bill 1535, legislation that establishes the Feather Alert Notice System in North Dakota. I am honored to be the prime sponsor of this bill, which has received strong support from law enforcement agencies, including the Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) and the North Dakota Highway Patrol, as well as each of the five tribal nations within our state.

HB 1535 is a proactive measure to address the crisis of missing Indigenous persons by creating an emergency alert system that will function similarly to Amber and Silver Alerts. This system will ensure that when an Indigenous person is reported missing under critical circumstances, a coordinated, statewide notification can be activated to aid in their safe recovery.

Right now, there are currently 24 missing Indigenous people in North Dakota. As of last night, a total of eight Indigenous individuals have gone missing since January 1, 2025—all of whom are under the age of 18. The Feather Alert will be another tool in our toolbox to combat the MMIP epidemic. However, this is not an alert that will be activated every time someone goes missing. The process will start at the local or tribal level, and only if the established criteria for a Feather Alert are met will the system be activated at the state level.

Tribal nations are also working to implement their own measures to address MMIP cases. Additionally, this bill aligns with HB 1199, which proposes the creation of an MMIP task force to improve communication among all agencies working on this crisis and to identify and fill the gaps that contribute to the disproportionately high rates of missing and murdered Indigenous people compared to the national average.

Some of the key provisions in HB 1535 include:

1. Establishing the Feather Alert System
 - The BCI, in partnership with the ND Highway Patrol and State Radio, will oversee the alert system, ensuring a rapid response to reports of missing Indigenous persons.
 - The alert will be broadcast using the Emergency Alert System (EAS), similar to Amber and Silver Alerts, to notify the public and law enforcement statewide.
2. Tribal and State Collaboration
 - The Indian Affairs Commission will serve as the primary liaison between state and tribal governments.
 - The bill mandates annual public meetings with tribal representatives and law enforcement to assess and improve the effectiveness of the Feather Alert system.

3. Funding and Implementation

- HB 1535 includes an appropriation of \$250,000 to support the implementation, coordination, and evaluation of the system.
- This funding will allow for training, public awareness campaigns, and a full-time coordinator at the Indian Affairs Commission to manage the program.

Support and Potential Amendments

- I have worked closely with BCI and the ND Highway Patrol and have attached amendments to strengthen implementation.
- Importantly, all five tribal nations in North Dakota support this legislation, recognizing it as a critical step toward saving lives and protecting Indigenous communities.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, HB 1535 is about ensuring that when an Indigenous person goes missing, every available resource is mobilized to bring them home safely. This is not just a tribal issue—it is a North Dakota issue, and it is our responsibility to act.

I respectfully ask for your support of HB 1535 and look forward to working with the committee on any necessary amendments to make this bill as effective as possible.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am happy to answer any questions.