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January 28, 2021

House Agriculture Committee
North Dakota Assembly

Re: HB 1444

Dear House Agriculture Committee:

Please accept this written testimony in opposition to House Bill 1444.

The North Dakota Legislative Assembly rejected historic horse racing in 2019, and it should do so again.

Historic horse racing is slot machines in disguise. Turtle Mountain opposes any expansion of non-tribal slot machines in the State of North Dakota.

Retaining exclusive rights to gaming is critical to tribal economic sustainability and progress. North Dakota Tribes have already been hard hit by the loss of exclusivity. Nationwide, tribal gaming revenues from 2017 to 2018 went up by 4%, but in North Dakota over that same time period tribal gaming revenues plummeted by 18%. We all know why, tribal exclusivity in slot machine gaming in North Dakota has given way to the rapid expansion of ETAB machines, and it accelerated even more in 2019. House Bill 1444 is an attempt to expand non-tribal slot machine gaming in the State of North Dakota even further, accelerating a problem that is already impacting the ability of North Dakota Tribes to provide necessary programs for our members.

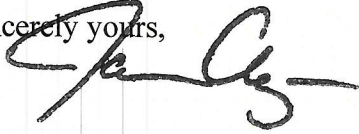
Tribes desperately need the revenues. Tribes are governments, working without a tax base, to serve the most vulnerable population in the State. Turtle Mountain has a much higher unemployment rate than the State. Turtle Mountain has a much higher percentage of people living below the poverty line than the State. Turtle Mountain has a much lower median household income than the State. Turtle Mountain has a housing crisis, homelessness and overcrowding. Turtle Mountain has a much higher percentage of kids in the foster care system than the State. By one recent North Dakota study, Native American children constitute 8% of the child population of the State, and 40% of its foster care population.

Poverty on reservations directly impacts the State and its budget by increasing the expenditures in State social welfare and social services programs. Our tribal government investments in tribal programs help to lift tribal members out of poverty and help to keep

members from going into poverty. This is a positive, if usually unseen, impact on the State's social welfare program budget.

Please do not support House Bill 1444. Thank you for your kind attention.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jamie Azure', with a stylized, flowing script.

Jamie Azure
Chairman