

Hello Chairman Weisz, Vice Chairwoman Rohr, and members of the House Human Services Committee,

My name is Maura Ferguson and I live in District 18. I am writing this from a personal perspective and not on behalf of either of my employers. I am writing to urge you to issue a “Do Pass” on HB 1488 to establish a Truth, Healing, and Reconciliation Commission within the state of North Dakota.

Indigenous People in North Dakota have been victims of terrible acts against humanity including having their children ripped away from their families of origin and sent to boarding schools – something that has lasting impact on ND Indigenous families to this very day. As a social worker, I know that Native American children are disproportionately represented within North Dakota’s foster care system. As a social worker and a mother I can also state with certainty that there is no hope of true healing without honest, deliberate recognition of the trauma that victims endured. North Dakota’s Indigenous people did not deserve the way they were treated, and North Dakota should do all within its power to learn about the trauma endured, rectify this to the best of their ability, and mitigate future trauma.

There are many countries around the world who have established Truth and Reconciliation Commissions to educate, take accountability, and foster healing. There are also incidences where this has happened in the United States as well, including the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Maine Wabanaki-State Truth and Reconciliation Commission. You have the chance here to further the precedent set in Maine – we can show other states how to take accountability and heal, creating a healthier community and culture. It’s well beyond time for North Dakota to get this done. Please issue a “do pass” for HB 1488. Thank you.