



North Dakota House of Representatives

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COMMITTEES:

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Madame Chair Roers and committee members, for the record my name is Collette Brown, District 9 Representative which encompasses two of the five Tribes of ND, the TMBCI and Spirit Lake Tribes. I stand before you in strong and unwavering support of HB 1535—the Feather Alert System.

Imagine the heart-wrenching fear of discovering that a loved one is missing—the uncertainty, the panic, and the desperate hope for their safe return. Now, imagine facing these emotions with limited resources, inadequate support, and without a system designed to quickly mobilize communities and law enforcement to locate your loved one. This is the reality for many Indigenous families across our nation. But there is a solution: the Feather Alert System.

The Feather Alert System is a critical tool designed to address the disproportionate rates at which Indigenous people, especially women and girls, go missing or are victims of violence. Like the AMBER Alert system used for abducted children, the Feather Alert would rapidly disseminate information through media, highway signs, and digital platforms, enlisting the public's help in locating missing Indigenous individuals.

Too many of our Native people have gone missing, and too many families are left without answers. Right now, Spirit Lake is still searching for our missing—Jemini Posey, Isaac Hunt, and others whose names deserve to be spoken, like Renzo Bullhead and remembered, like Olivia Lonebear and Savannah Greywind. Everyone of North Dakota's five tribal nations—Standing Rock, Spirit Lake, Turtle Mountain, Three Affiliated Tribes, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate—has suffered this heartbreaking loss. Families across our communities live with the agony of not knowing if their loved ones will ever come home.

When our people go missing, their names may fade from the headlines, but they never fade from our hearts. Each day, we continue to search, to hope, to pray. The Feather Alert System is more than an emergency notice—it is a call to action. It ensures that when a Native person goes missing, law enforcement and communities mobilize immediately, because time is the difference between bringing someone home or another unsolved case. It means no more families left searching alone, no more waiting for help that comes too late.

Opponents may argue about costs or administrative burdens. However, the stakes of ignoring this epidemic are far greater measured in lost lives, broken families, and communities left in perpetual grief. Implementing the Feather Alert System is not just a logistical decision; it is an ethical responsibility.

We know that alert systems work. A recent Silver Alert in North Dakota led to young people finding the missing elder just in time; much longer, and it could have been too late. We need that same urgency, that same "just-in-time" help for our Native people. This system will save lives. It could have made a difference just 11 days ago. Today, you have the power to play a historic and unprecedented role in ensuring this protection for our communities.

Our people have always stood together. We were raised to listen, to act, to protect. This bill reflects that teaching. It amplifies the voices of our missing. It gives families hope. It sends a clear message: you are our neighbors, and you care too.

As a public official and a tribally enrolled member of the Spirit Lake Tribe, I know HB 1535 is needed. As North Dakota legislators, we have an opportunity to foster effective collaboration between tribal, state, and federal agencies so that we can help all citizens of North Dakota spread awareness and stand in solidarity with our ND Tribes.

This is not just policy. It is humanity. It is kindness, support, and respect. It is doing what is right. Passing this bill means standing with Native families. It means being our friends, our allies, our partners in justice. It means ensuring that no more mothers, fathers, or children are left to wonder if enough was done.

I urge you to pass HB 1535. Stand with us. Bring hope. Bring action. Bring our missing home.

Thank you for your time and consideration.