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House of Representatives

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Ponka-We Victors
Representative, 103rd District

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**House Federal & State Affairs Committee
Representative John Barker, Chairman**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2009 that will abolish Columbus Day and replace it with Indigenous Peoples Day. The passage of this bill will help seek truth and dispel the myth that Columbus discovered America. Changing this day will celebrate the Indigenous peoples' survival, resilience and deep contributions to all peoples that now live on this land. It's estimated that there were 25 million Indigenous Peoples in the Americas long before Columbus' arrival. After his arrival, the population was decimated through slavery and disease, and the Indigenous People were forced from their native land. As part of the slave trade, Columbus supervised the selling of young Indigenous girls, as young as 9 and 10 years old, into sex slavery. Therefore celebrating Columbus Day means celebrating his actions, which include the murder, rape, and enslavement of Indigenous peoples.

The Columbus holiday was enacted in 1934, a time where Native Americans did not have the right to vote in most states and Jim Crow laws were still on the books; 30 years before the Civil Rights Movement would even begin. Indigenous Peoples Day has been adopted in more than 60 cities across the country; including our own cities of Wichita and Lawrence, and by many other states. Repealing Columbus Day will counter the negative images, stereotypes, and false history that our children are subjected to during this time of year.

We are asking the House Federal and State Affairs committee to correct this error and to reconcile with our past and forge a future that helps us all. The repeal is a step towards racial truth that we are so desperately in need of. We ask you to join us in making this first step to correct history, and take a step towards healing—for Indigenous peoples in Kansas, for the integrity of our country, and for all of humanity.

Thank you for your time,

Ponka-We Victors

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