

To: House Judiciary Committee and Chairman Fred Patton

From: Georgia Blackwood, an enrolled member of the Kickapoo Tribe in Kansas and a Lawrence, Kansas Resident

Date: February 17, 2020

Re: HB 2646- Requiring the Attorney General to coordinate training for law enforcement agencies on missing and murdered Indigenous people

Good afternoon Chairman Patton and Members of the Committee. My name is Georgia Blackwood and I'm a longtime resident of Lawrence, Kansas. I'm an enrolled member of the Kickapoo Tribe in Kansas and am affiliated with the Prairie Band Potawatomi Tribe in Kansas.

I appreciate the opportunity to present written testimony in support of HB-2646.

It's hard for me to come to testify for legislation that is critical for my community. Indigenous women and girls face disproportionately high rates of violence in the United States. Experts estimate Native American women face a murder rate 10 times higher than the national average, with 84% experiencing some form of violence in their lifetimes, according to research from the National Institute for Justice, the research arm of the Department of Justice.

These are not just numbers. These are real people. This is so frustrating, so I am here today to ask you to act and vote in favor of HB 2646. The State of Kansas must coordinate training for law enforcement agencies on missing and murdered Indigenous people, so this does not keep on going.

There are 574 federally recognized Indian tribes in the United States and approximately 326 Indian reservations. Over one million Native American residents live on or near reservation lands. Victims' families can face a patchwork of tribal, state and federal law-enforcement agencies to respond to a crime, and sometimes victims are dismissed as chronic runaways. This issue has plagued our communities since 1492 when Europeans would kidnap our women and ship them to Europe.

I live in a community where our Indigenous people have been murdered or missing. It's time that we look for solutions and work together to heal and serve justice for Indigenous people and their families.

Miigwetch,

Georgia Blackwood