

State of Kansas
House of Representatives

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Ponka-We Victors
Representative, 103rd District

January 19, 2021

House Judiciary Committee
Representative Fred Patton, Chairman

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2008. This bill works to coordinate trainings between the Kansas tribes, the Kansas Bureau of Investigation, the Kansas law enforcement, and other state agencies regarding missing and murdered indigenous persons in Kansas. Native American women are missing and being murdered at high rates across the country. On some reservations, Native American women are murdered at more than 10 times the national average. According to a study in 2016 by the National Crime Information Center, there were around 5,712 reports of missing American Indian and Alaska Native women. Currently, there is no data collection process in place to prove how many Native American women are missing nor is there available training on this issue for law enforcement.

As vice-chairwoman of the National Native American caucus of state legislators, I have worked with other Native American state legislators across the country to examine this issue. In 2019, lawmakers in 14 states introduced 30 measures about the underreporting and data collection problems that demonstrate the difficulty in solving the murder cases of missing and indigenous women. Of the 30 measures of legislation that were introduced last year, 17 were enacted. Therefore, I know this bill will be a step in the right direction for Kansas.

Personally, I have had relatives and friends who have been murdered and some that are still missing because of this national unspoken crisis. I ask you to please support and pass HB 2008. Thank you for your time and I stand for questions.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rep. Dr. Ponka-We Victors". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Representative Dr. Ponka-We Victors