



Native American Youth and Family Center

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February 10, 2020

To: Chair Sanchez, Vice-Chair Bynum, Vice Chair Sprenger, Members of the House Committee on Judiciary

RE: HB 4148 – Relating to Indian Children

Chair Sanchez, Vice-Chair Bynum, Vice-Chair Sprenger and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary, my name is Miranda Mishan and I serve as the Community Development Policy Coordinator at the Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA) in Portland. NAYA is a wraparound agency, serving roughly 2,000 individuals and impacting the lives of over 10,000 individuals throughout the region each year. We have services for youth of all ages and a wide array of family services. Additionally, NAYA offers a range of education, health, housing, economic development and community support programs. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of House Bill 4248.

With the creation of the federal Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) in 1978, the U.S. government attempted to retroactively repair and prevent further damage to Native families across the country. For many, however, the damage was done. When my great-grandparents were deemed unfit to care for my grandfather and his eight siblings, the family was split up. Some were sent to boarding school, and some to non-Indian homes. All became estranged, from each other and their traditional ways of life. The trauma created by this removal is truly intergenerational and continues to shape my life today.

While my grandfather has since passed away, Native children today are placed in foster care at a disproportionate rate – three times that of the overall Oregon child population. Cultural, tribal and family connections are essential to the development of healthy children and are put at risk when a child enters foster care. Agencies like NAYA provide the support and tools necessary for foster youth to build these relationships but ICWA creates the legal protections necessary to promote and ensure these crucial connections.

On behalf of the Native American Youth and Family Center, I urge you to support HB 4148 and the creation of a state ICWA statute.

Thank you again for your time.

Miranda Mishan



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