

Re: Testimony in Support of House Bill 2505

Chair Williams and members of the committee,

*(Northern Cheyenne intro)*

Hello, my name is Gloria BigBack. I am 16 and I identify as Northern Cheyenne. I have been in 7 foster placements since being in foster care, until I was finally placed with my grandma.

The racial bias in the foster care system is keeping foster youth from their family, culture, community, and their identities.

Before foster care, I was with my family practicing our Native ways of life. I was a fancy dancer, I attended powwows regularly, and I was learning my language. When I was taken from my family and put in foster care, I was placed with a lot of non-Native people who didn't know who I was as a Native youth. I was stripped from my Native identity and cultural practices from my family. Being in a non-Native environment led to me getting bullied for the color of my skin, which led to behavior issues. My foster placement was not supportive and my trauma wasn't prioritized. Instead, it was minimized by them saying I was "seeking attention".

Families in Oregon deserve fair and equitable access to child welfare supports- it's our responsibility to dismantle these systems of oppression that currently exist. Investing in this Commission by supporting HB 2505 is an important step to help make that a reality.