

Submitter: Elizabeth Watson
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3198

2/4/2024

Dear Chair Kropf, Vice Chairs Chotzen and Wallan, and members of the House Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Elizabeth Watson and I am Iñupiaq from the Native Village of Kotzebue and Mexican on my maternal side and a descendant of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa and the Omaha Tribe of Nebraska on my paternal side. I currently reside in Multnomah county and work as a family advocate for an Indigenous non-profit organization called the Future Generations Collaborative.

I am writing in support of HB 3198, which directs the Department of Justice to study Missing and Murdered Indigenous People and to report its findings to the interim committees of the Legislative Assembly related to public safety.

This amendment directs the Oregon Health Authority to dedicate staff to addressing the Missing and Murdered Indigenous People epidemic in Oregon through providing:

- Victim services and outreach
- Development of interagency agreements with Tribal governments
- Maintenance of data on Missing and Murdered Indigenous people in this state
- Collaboration with representatives of the nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon to implement community education and support youth engagement initiatives.

I support this bill because I care about our Native people, families and communities. We have waited far too long for action and this bill is an important step toward addressing the critical issue of MMIP in Oregon. Our people deserve to feel safe, protected and supported. This legislation reflects a necessary commitment to ensuring our safety and wellbeing. This bill acknowledges this crisis and begins to provide the necessary systematic change to respond effectively and with care.

The State of Oregon has an opportunity to actively engage in addressing the Missing and Murdered Indigenous People epidemic, and foster intergenerational healing that will last for generations. I strongly urge you to vote yes on HB 3198.

Respectfully,
Elizabeth Watson