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House of Representatives

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Ponka-We Victors
Representative, 103rd District

March 5, 2018

Senate Federal & State Affairs Committee
Senator Bud Estes, Chairman

Chairman Estes and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB 2498. In the past, Native Americans were prohibited from speaking their tribal language and wearing their regalia. The respect and recognition of our culture has improved, but there still is a fear of being assimilated again into the mainstream of America and losing our cultural identity. Not being allowed to wear our tribal regalia during important times in our lives is still an issue. This bill would protect a Native American's right to wear traditional tribal regalia and objects of cultural significance during public events. As Native Americans, we are proud to showcase and share our culture with others, especially during times of importance. Cultural regalia (not costumes) is a part of our identity and represents what tribe or nation we come from. Tribal regalia and other objects of culture significance have meaning to an individual and can be passed down from generation to generation. As Native Americans, we consider our tribal regalia as our best piece of clothing and proudly wear it when an occasion arises.

As you all have witnessed, I proudly wear my tribal regalia at the Capitol, especially during the swearing in ceremony. We are proud people, and we shouldn't be prohibited by others from wearing our tribal regalia. Also, the bill encourages Native American students to be proud of their heritage and who they are by being able to wear their regalia during significant events in their lifetime. Last year, the Montana State legislature passed a similar bill, which was successfully signed into law.

Thank you for your time.
Weblaha (Thank you),

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

Ponka-We Victors
District 103