

To Chairman John Barker and the House Committee on Federal and State Affairs:

As American Indian education stakeholders in Kansas, **we write in support of HB 2009** because it helps the entire state move towards a more culturally responsive environment for Indigenous people, particularly in our schools and universities.

In the context of education, abolishing Columbus Day and replacing it with Indigenous Peoples Day is in line with best practice. As an example, the nation's leading advocacy group for American Indians in education, the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) passed resolution 2015-04 supporting this very move. Additionally, the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) passed a position statement last year that calls for institutions of education to affirm the existence of Indigenous peoples and their histories by asking educators to acknowledge that not all people's stories are rooted in European history, exploration and discovery of a "new" world. In reality, the ancestors of Indigenous peoples walked the Great Plains of Kansas long before Columbus landed in the Caribbean.

As it pertains to Kansas, Columbus never made it to continental North America or the land that has become the United States, nor did he ever visit the land we now call the State of Kansas. However, Indigenous people have been central to the entirety of human history within this state's current boundaries. Kansas has been home to over 25 Indigenous Nations since European colonization and remains the home of four Native Nations in the present (Iowa, Kickapoo, Prairie Band Potawatomi, and Sac and Fox). This state is also home to Haskell Indian Nations University, one of the nation's primary centers for education, research, and cultural preservation serving Indigenous students from across the country.

Because the State of Kansas no longer considers Columbus Day one of the eight official state holidays, making this change would not cause any undue burden. In fact, the state's largest two universities, K-State and KU, have already developed annual programming intended to celebrate Indigenous Peoples Day instead of Columbus Day.

We applaud this name change because after centuries of attempted genocide and cultural erasure, Indigenous people are still here. It would bring significant acknowledgement and recognition to Indigenous Kansans past and present, and very few barriers stand in the way of making this change. It would also serve as an excellent educational tool for young people throughout the state, bringing visibility to a population that has historically been overlooked as active people in the present. We strongly urge you to change the name of this holiday to "Indigenous Peoples Day." Thank you for your consideration.

For any follow up questions, please do not hesitate to contact Alex Red Corn at aredcorn@gmail.com, or 913.206.2392.

Respectfully,

Alex Red Corn, Ed.D (Osage)
Jennifer Attocknie (Comanche)
Carole Cadue-Blackwood (Kickapoo Tribe of KS)
Lisa Tatonetti, Ph.D
Dal Domebo (Kiowa, Ponca, Quapaw)
Melissa M. Peterson (Diné)
LaVerne Bitsie-Baldwin (Diné)
Tai Edwards, Ph.D
Brandon Haddock, Ph.D (Tsalagi/Cherokee)

Sherana Becenti (Diné)
Ed Smith (Osage)
Chris Heatwole (Quapaw)
Debra J. Bolton, Ph.D. (Ohkay Owingeh/N. Ute)
Riley Hundley
Audrey Swartz, MLIS (Miami)
Rachel Levitt, Ph.D
Vernon Miller (Omaha)

