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House of Representatives

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Ponka-We Victors
Representative, 103rd District

February 19, 2020

House Judiciary Committee
Representative Fred Patton, Chairman

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2646. This bill works to coordinate trainings between the Kansas tribes, the Kansas Bureau of Investigation, Kansas law enforcement, and other state agencies regarding missing and murdered indigenous persons in Kansas. Native American women are missing and being murdered at high rates across the country. On some reservations, Native American women are murdered at more than 10 times the national average. According to a study in 2016 by the National Crime Information Center, there were around 5,712 reported missing American Indian and Alaska Native women. Currently, there is no data collection process in place to prove how many Native American women are missing nor is there available training on this issue for law enforcement in Kansas.

As vice-chairwoman of the National Native American caucus of state legislators, I have worked with other Native American state legislators across the country to examine this issue. In 2019, lawmakers in 14 states introduced 30 measures about the underreporting and data collection problems that demonstrate the difficulty in solving the murder cases of missing and indigenous women. Of the 30 measures of legislation that were introduced last year, 17 were enacted.

Personally, I have had relatives and friends who have been murdered and some that are still missing because of this crisis. Therefore, I know this would be a step in the right direction to help bring awareness to this issue. Thank you for your time and I stand for questions.

Best,

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

Representative Ponka-We Victors

DATA A NATIONWIDE ^ CRISIS: MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN & GIRLS

In November 2018, Urban Indian Health Institute (UIHI) released a first-of-its-kind report that provides a comprehensive snapshot of the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls (MMIWG) crisis in urban areas throughout the United States.

UIHI identified 506 cases of missing and murdered American Indian and Alaska Native women and girls in 71 cities across 29 states throughout the United States. **Due to the poor data collection by numerous cities, the 506 cases identified are likely an undercount of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls in urban areas.**

THE DATA

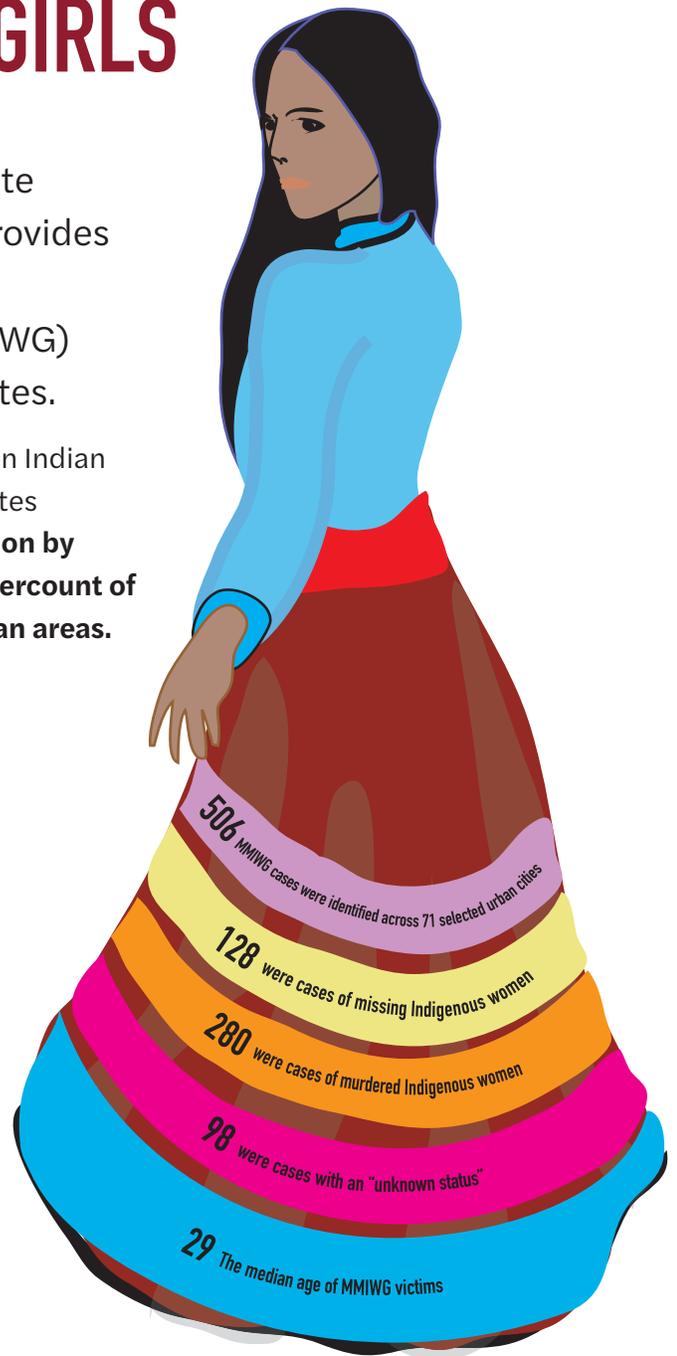
506 MMIWG cases were identified across 71 selected urban cities

128 were cases of missing Indigenous women

280 were cases of murdered Indigenous women

98 were cases with an "unknown status"

29 was the median age of MMIWG victims



Visit UIHI.ORG to read the full MMIWG report.

Contents in the report may be triggering.



Urban Indian
Health Institute
A Division of the Seattle Indian Health Board

HOW YOU CAN HELP

UIHI's report has influenced legislation throughout the country and helped bring national attention to the issue. **Here are some ways you can help keep the conversation going:**

- **Hold MMIWG awareness events** in your area.
- **Hold police departments accountable** by ensuring they are taking the necessary steps to collect information on MMIWG cases.
- **Educate and inform policymakers**—city council members, representatives, senators, governors, mayors, and tribal officials—with data from UIHI's report or other relevant information.
- **Advocate for more funding** to address MMIWG in your area.

The research and development of UIHI's report were done with only \$20,000 and two researchers. **Even with the small budget and limited resources, UIHI was able to find 506 MMIWG cases, 153 of which were not even in law enforcement records.**

There is much more work to be done to make sure Native women and girls are safe. **You can help by donating at sihb.org/donate and make a note that you are donating for MMIWG research.**

Bringing to light the stories of these women through data is an integral part of moving toward an end to this epidemic of violence.

