



CITY OF
PORTLAND, OREGON

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

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February 20, 2019
Representative Jennifer Williamson
House Committee on Judiciary
900 Court St. NE, Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: HB 2625

Chair Williamson and members of the committee,

The City of Portland supports HB 2625 which directs Oregon State Police to study how to increase criminal justice resources relating to missing and murdered Native American Women.

The threat of violence against Indigenous women and girls stems from a long legacy of genocide, removal, termination, of unprepared law enforcement and legal systems. This reality is staggering.

Though the number of missing and murdered Native women and girls is difficult to estimate, in the U.S., murder is the third-leading cause of death among Native women.¹ In Oregon, Native American women face the highest rates of rape of any racial group.² The National Indigenous Women's Resource Center states that a study by the U.S. Department of Justice has found that in some tribal communities, American Indian women face murder rates that are more than 10 times the national average.³

The lasting effects of colonialization, a history of oppressive policies, and jurisdictional issues is directly correlated to the rise of violence against Native women and girls. The disappearances and murders of Native women and girls is often connected to domestic violence, sexual assault, or trafficking.

In Oregon:

- Native women face the highest rates of rape of any racial group.³
- Traffickers are targeting Native women and girls, often moving them through our city on the human trafficking corridor that runs along Interstate 5.⁴
- I-5 corridor trafficking includes the highest number of Native women who are in Portland from other states.⁵

¹ [CDC: Racial and Ethnic Differences in Homicides of Adult Women and the Role of Intimate Partner Violence \(2017\)](#)

² [Count Her In: A report about women and girls in Oregon \(2016\)](#)

³ [Webinar: Honoring Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women \(2017\)](#)

⁴ [Sex Trafficking Rampant in Indian Country; Pimps on Prowl for Native Girls. Indian Country Today \(2012\)](#)

⁵ [Human Trafficking & Native Peoples in Oregon: A Human Rights Report \(2014\)](#)

- The Gateway Center for Domestic Violence served 119 Native women in 2017, which represents a 200% higher rate than the total Native American population in the Portland metro area. This count does not include those women who reported they are two or more races.

To eliminate these statistics, we need to increase awareness of this issue, and root causes which includes historical trauma, institutional racism, jurisdictional confusion and coordination, and lack of reliable data. HB 2625 will provide an in-depth look at the barriers that exist and will highlight the ways in which law enforcement systems can partner to close the gaps in reporting, identifying and investigating missing and murdered American Indian/Alaska Native women.

Last year, the City of Portland joined other local governments in declaring May 5th as Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Day of Awareness. In our region, we were joined by Multnomah County and Metro Regional Government as partners in raising awareness.⁶ Senator Ron Wyden signed on as a cosponsor for Senate Resolution 401 to designate May 5, 2018 as the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls.⁷

The City of Portland urges the support of HB 2625.

Thank you,

Laura John
Tribal Relations Director
City of Portland, Oregon

⁶ <https://oregonmetro.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=6218505&GUID=29900193-3D8A-48B0-AD1C-815879283344>

⁷ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-resolution/401/text>