

Good afternoon Sen. Slossberg, Rep. Morin, co-chairs and members of this committee. My Name is Rep. Ernest Hewett and I am here to support HB 5733.

The indigenous people of North America- the First Americans- have woven rich and diverse threads into the tapestry of our Nations' heritage. Throughout their long history on this great land. They have faced moments of profound triumph and tragedy alike. During national Native American Heritage Month, we recognize their many accomplishment, contributions, and sacrifices, and we pay tribute to their participation in all aspects of American society.

They have guided our land stewardship policies, added immeasurably to our culture heritage, and demonstrated courage in the face of adversity. From the American Revolution to combat missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, the have fought valiantly in defense of our nation as dedicated servicemen and women. Their native languages have also played a pivotal role on the battlefield. During the world Wars I and II, Native Americans have distinguished themselves as inventors, entrepreneurs, spiritual leaders, and scholars. Our debt to our First American is immense, as is our responsibility to ensure their fair, equal treatment and honor the commitments we made to their forebears.

I therefore fully support this resolution and urge my colleagues to do the same. Thank you.