

HB22-1327

04/25/202

Monique Terpstra  
1760 10 Rd  
Mack, CO. 81525  
970-261-3289  
mterpstra@ccdconline.org

I Monique Terpstra and I am writing this in support of Bill HB-22-1327.

This bill should be passed to help to help identify what traumas and tragedies happened to our Native American children. We Native Americans have gone through generations of historical traumas over and over and is still being passed down from generation to generation. A lot of the initial genocide and abuse started with the Native American Boarding schools. We need to stop this from happening and find a way to move forward. The past is horrifying, and it is only fair we finally get a chance to send our abused, tormented children home so they can rest peacefully. We would also like to know exactly what happened at the Teller and Fort Lewis Indian Boarding schools. The ongoing historical traumas continue to hurt our people.

These two properties should be given back to the Native American Tribes or should become some sort of an honorary site for the children that went through all the horrible torture. Our tribes in Colorado have lost so much and have never been given a chance to move forward without having the past hang over our heads. It is time to move forward and close these doors.

We were told we could be whatever we want to be, just not Native Americans. It is time to stop all these atrocities and start to heal the hurt. We are human's past and, in the future, not savages. We want to be wanted and appreciated. I know a lot of people nowadays do appreciate Native Americans and I thank you for helping us move into a place where we belong.

I appreciate you taking the time on behalf of such and important bill and strongly encourage a vote of support for HB22-1327

Thank you,

Monique Terpstra

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Thank you,

Monique Terpstra

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Good Afternoon Representative Kennedy and members of the committee:

My name is Julie LeClaire, NP-C, and I am from Grand Junction, Colorado (81501) and I am submitting written testimony today in support of House Bill 22-1327.

I understand that the Teller Project is already underway through the Department of Human Services and that the continued research and sale of this land is a vital next step in recognizing the harm that was caused and the breadth of the lives lost as a result of this boarding school.

As a member of the community where the Teller institute is located, I wanted to make sure the legislature knows community members believe this is a vital issue to address.

The Teller Indian School (later called the Teller Institute, is located at 2800 Riverside Parkway in Grand Junction, Colorado. It was named after U.S. Senator Henry Teller of Colorado, who was instrumental in passing legislation for the creation of the school in 1886. The school followed the philosophy of Colonel Richard Henry Pratt, founder of the Carlyle School in Pennsylvania. He believed that Indian children must be removed from their families and culture and immersed in Western Civilization. The Carlyle motto was "kill the Indian to save the man."

This school impacted not only local Ute tribes, but also tribes from Arizona, Nevada, and beyond. Children from a dozen sovereign nations were brought to this boarding school and stripped of their customs, forbidden to speak in their native language, and were assigned new names.

I know there are at least 21 children buried on the property in a cemetery site that has since been lost. These children deserve to be found, identified, and returned home. It is just the very first step toward acknowledging the abuse and victimization that occurred and the harm that continues to impact their loved ones and tribes.

I know that the school was conceptualized as a farming school but the soil was too poor and the children were instead sent to farmers that relied on Indigenous students for farm labor and as servants, and as laborers for sugar beet farming. Students were supposed to be paid for their labor but it was found that the superintendent had used the money for his own purposes.

I know that the soil was so poor and the water table was so high that the institute battled sewage problems and the children complained of stomach pain from drinking the water. There is much to learn to fully understand the depth of abuse endured at the Teller school.

The West Slope is a beautiful place to live and work. But we have a history of benefiting off the lives of people who had no say, no voice. We can't be a better community until we recognize the abuse, harm, and death that was caused, and begin to make it right.

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I want to emphasize the need for tribal outreach. I strongly encourage that the execution of section 3 of this bill, pertaining to the Teller facility, only be done in consultation with the sovereign nations BEFORE the sale or transfer of land to ensure that it is only done so in alignment with sovereign nations' wishes.

Lastly, I want to share that as a Nurse Practitioner in Primary Care Practice I often work with the poor and working class as well as a large number of minorities. I witness on a daily basis the continued systemic oppression of the poor/working class and minority groups that makes it difficult for them to access health care and for their voices to be heard. There is a general sense of entitlement that continues to be pervasive in our society and this is clearly demonstrated on the Western Slope of Colorado. I often spend numerous hours fighting to remove roadblocks to access as it relates to these populations. I am a member of the dominant group and often have to check my own privilege to remind myself of these cold, hard facts. I work to support education for my colleagues so that we don't forget how important it is to protect communities of color and communities that suffer from the systemic crippling brought on by poverty. I believe that it is my responsibility to ensure that we as a society do not leave these individuals without a voice. It is an honor to support this work and to give a voice to the children who were affected by the past acts of oppression. Although there is no actual way to change the past harm that has been committed, I do believe that this bill will give voice to the forgotten and provide opportunity for healing within the community. I strongly urge the committee to support this bill.

Thank you for your time and commitment to service of the communities of Colorado.

Professionally,

Julie LeClaire, NP-C

Good afternoon Committee:

My name is Gina Lopez.

I'm a member of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe and resident of Towaoc, CO.

Today I am representing myself in support of Senate Bill one, three, two, seven – concerning Native American Boarding schools.

Along with many members of my family and my community, I also attended an Indian boarding school that exists still today. Sherman Indian High School in Riverside, CA.

The atrocities that children of Native/Indigenous people endured in these places is and has been very real. The lasting impacts from the abuses in these government-run institutions are still felt in the many forms of violence that we experience on our bodies.

I am a victim advocate first and to know that we can trace the abuses that our community visit upon one another to what was learned in those early institutions is dishonorable. We would be missing an important aspect of our work confronting violence in our communities if we dismissed this intersection in our work.

In order for us to heal our deep-rooted traumas, we must start by acknowledging that these things happened. We have to identify those institutions that are poisoned by the acts inflicted on our children who are now our elders. We have a disconnection from our language, our practices and our pride in our culture because those things were beaten out of our elders. Where we should have been passing knowledge, wisdom and practices are now intertwined with fear-based religious and military mindsets.

This has greatly shifted how we are able to define resiliency. Assimilation has distorted how we view and respect truly traditional beliefs like LGBTQ2S relatives. These are spiritual beings who hold an important healing medicine for all of our people that we are not accessing nor are we honoring how we would had our beliefs not been interfered with by folks continuing to believe they know better than we do.

Our LGBTQ2S kids and relatives are thrown out of their homes and communities for their identity, for loving how they love, for simply being the beautiful medicine they were meant to be for their people.

Children in boarding schools were violated physically, spiritually, emotionally and sexually. Today we are picking up the remnants of those impacts in working with survivors of violence still being passed on from one hurt person to the next.

We are passing along violence we were taught instead of the lessons of love, worth and resilience. We have to fight harder for those lessons and push for our elders to heal so that we can uncover the important wisdom they have buried deep because of what boarding schools taught them.

I support Colorado joining in this effort to start steps to rectify this horrific history and to work to return children to their families. The boarding school era is also what roots the missing and murdered indigenous women, girls, 2spirit and relatives movements that will continue to center this truth.

I urge you all to stand with Native/Indigenous folks and join the work across Nations and countries to bring justice for the impacts of Indian/Native American boarding schools.

Thank you.