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SENATE MEMORIAL 115

54th legislature - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2019

INTRODUCED BY

John Pinto

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THAT THE UNITED STATES AND THE NAVAJO NATION TAKE PROACTIVE STEPS TO PROTECT CHILDREN WHO ARE VICTIMS OF VIOLENT CRIME AND TO HOLD THE PERPETRATORS ACCOUNTABLE.

WHEREAS, sexual violence against children is horrendous and all too common in the Navajo Nation; and

WHEREAS, the Navajo Nation council has created the Naabik'íyáti' sexual assault prevention subcommittee to address this issue; and

WHEREAS, the subcommittee found that Navajo police receive an average of six reports of rape per week; and

WHEREAS, twenty-two percent of Navajo children receiving health services were seen for sexual abuse or assault; and

WHEREAS, it is estimated that one in four Navajo children have experienced some form of sexual abuse; and

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WHEREAS, many of these crimes go uninvestigated, and when they are investigated, they are often referred to federal courts for prosecution, where conviction rates are extremely low; and

WHEREAS, the trauma from abuse lives on in the victims of these terrible crimes; and

WHEREAS, adverse childhood experiences have been shown to have long-lasting effects in many aspects of a person's life; and

WHEREAS, the cost of those effects is not only felt by the victims but also by their families and entire communities; and

WHEREAS, there are also economic costs that can be attributed to those crimes; and

WHEREAS, these crimes and the lack of accountability for them contribute to a public health and safety epidemic in the Navajo Nation; and

WHEREAS, as these crimes persist, one-fourth of Navajo youth consider suicide; and

WHEREAS, there are few resources on the Navajo Nation that are dedicated to addressing sexual violence against children; and

WHEREAS, the frequency of these crimes and the low conviction rates create ongoing trauma for the victims, who often continue to live in the same communities as the perpetrators; and

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WHEREAS, despite the work of the Naabik'iyáti' sexual assault prevention subcommittee, much work remains to be done to address the epidemic of sexual violence against children on the Navajo Nation; and

WHEREAS, these crimes often go unreported or are reported years after the crime occurred; and

WHEREAS, even when these crimes are reported, the federal and Navajo statutes of limitations for these crimes are three and two years, respectively, from the occurrence of the crime; and

WHEREAS, there is a nationwide movement that is gaining momentum in the fight to remove criminal statutes of limitations for child sex abuse cases;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the United States and the Navajo Nation be requested to take proactive steps to protect children who are victims of violent crime and to hold the perpetrators accountable; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the New Mexico congressional delegation, the president of the Navajo Nation and the speaker of the Navajo Nation council.

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