



Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs

Tom Bradshaw, Chair

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House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee

The Honorable Melissa Wells, Chair

The Honorable Ken Kerr, Vice Chair

March 17, 2026

**FAV | HB 588 – Missing and Murdered American Indian and Alaskan
Native Women and Girls - Day of Awareness and Reporting Requirement**

Dear Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the **Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs (MCIA)**, I am submitting this testimony in strong support of **HB 588**. This vital piece of legislation requires the Governor to annually proclaim May 5th as Missing and Murdered American Indian and Alaskan Native Women and Girls Awareness Day and mandates the Department of State Police to report specific, critical data to the General Assembly.

As Chair of the MCIA, I believe this bill is a necessary step toward justice for our tribal communities and the protection of future generations. Our support is rooted in the following key pillars:

Violence against Indigenous and Native American women and girls has historically been overlooked or underreported. By establishing an official Day of Awareness brings much needed awareness and acknowledgment to this issue. It is a fundamental responsibility of the Indian Commission to ensure these voices are heard and that the public understands the unique vulnerabilities our communities face.

Currently, data collection regarding Native Americans in Maryland lacks the specificity required to solve systemic safety issues. HB 588 addresses this head-on by:

- Improving tracking and monitoring of missing persons cases.
- Requiring official reporting of findings to the General Assembly.
- Ensuring that Indigenous people are no longer "invisible" in the eyes of state statistics.

By requiring the Department of State Police to report specific data, this bill creates a framework for accountability. We must ensure that the individuals who have been taken from us are not silenced, but rather serve as the catalyst for meaningful policy change and enhanced law enforcement coordination.

The MCIA is grateful to Delegate Terri Hill and her co-sponsors for sponsoring this legislation. It is time to ensure that our sisters, daughters, and mothers are protected and that their disappearances are met with the full resources and attention of the State.

For these reasons, the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs respectfully requests a FAVORABLE report on HB 588.

Thank you for your leadership and for your consideration of our testimony.

Sincerely,

Tom Bradshaw

Tom Bradshaw Chair, Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs