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HB588 – MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND RELATIVES – COMMISSION AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Position: Support

HB588 addresses a crisis that Indigenous women, families, and advocates have been raising for years. Across the United States, Indigenous women experience disproportionately high rates of violence, disappearance, and homicide. Yet historically many of these cases have not been consistently tracked or properly reported, which has made the true scope of the problem difficult for policymakers and law enforcement to address.

The stories shared by Indigenous women and their families have been powerful and deeply troubling. Mothers searching for daughters who vanished and were never properly entered into databases. Families who were forced to conduct their own searches because coordination between agencies broke down. Cases that were misclassified or simply did not receive the urgency they deserved. These stories illustrate that the problem is not theoretical. It is real, and the consequences for families and communities are devastating.

HB588 begins to address those gaps by establishing a formal structure to examine the issue, improve coordination, and ensure that cases involving Indigenous women and relatives are documented and reported more consistently. Without accurate data and a coordinated response, it is impossible for policymakers to understand the scope of the crisis or develop effective solutions. This legislation moves Maryland toward a more responsible and informed approach.

This issue is also personal to me. I am part Cherokee, and I understand how often Indigenous voices have historically been overlooked when policies affecting their communities were being developed. The women and families who have brought attention to this crisis are asking for recognition, accountability, and action. HB588 reflects that call.

For these reasons, I support HB588 and urge a favorable report. Thank you for your time and consideration of this important bill.

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