

CTA Name: Establish and Fund the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) Office

Date Created: 4/11/21

Related Legislation: HF2124/SF1989

Description of the Issue: Recognizing that Indigenous women and girls are far more likely to experience violence, be murdered or go missing than other groups in Minnesota, in 2019, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's Task Force was created through unanimous bipartisan support of the Minnesota Legislature.

The Task Force brought together the voices of survivors, families, advocates, law enforcement, public health experts, legal experts, tribal leaders and legislators to develop targeted strategies to support, protect and heal Native communities.

On November 9, 2020, the MMIW Task Force released its findings. Among other things, they found that:

The issue of murdered and missing indigenous women is a crisis that permeates the criminal justice system, affecting systems that interact with victims, survivors and their families.

Indigenous women, girls and two spirit people are not at increased risk of violence because of individual risky behaviors or poor choices, but rather systemic risk factors such as poverty and homelessness, child welfare involvement, domestic violence, sex trafficking and prostitution which place them in dangerous situations.

Once an Indigenous woman or girl goes missing or dies under suspicious circumstances, the investigation, prosecution and sentencing processes that are supposed to serve justice often fail to provide equal and fair treatment for these Indigenous victims.

The system does not include sufficient resources for adequate culturally responsive healing resources for Indigenous victims or survivors, families and communities.

The MMIW Task Force recommended that, among other things, the legislature create an MMIW Office to provide ongoing attention to and leadership for this issue and ensure adequate funding and resources to implement its recommendations.

HF 2124 (author Keeler, 13 co-authors), **The MMIW Office Bill**, implements the Task Force's recommendations by creating an MMIW Office and appropriating money for its work. The bill is currently in the House Public Safety Omnibus and has broad support.

SF1989 (author Kunesch (DFL), co-author Bigham (DFL)), has been offered in Senate Public Safety Omnibus but has been turned down by Limmer. According to Bigham's legislative assistant, SF1989 can be added as an amendment when the Omnibus goes to the Senate floor.

Who to call/contact:

1. Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee

- a. **Committee Chair (Warren Limmer, R, 651-296-2159,**
<https://www.senate.mn/members/email-form/1032>);
- b. **Ranking Minority Member (Ron Latz, DFL, 651-297-8065,**
<https://www.senate.mn/members/email-form/1102>)
- c. **Vice Chair (Mark Johnson, R, 651-296-5782,**
<https://www.senate.mn/members/email-form/1217>)

Sample Script: My name is (insert name). I live in (insert town) and am calling you regarding SF1989, the MMIW Office Bill. In 2019 there was unanimous bipartisan support to create the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's Task force to investigate ways to stop the disproportionate and horrific violence suffered by MMIW in Minnesota. In late 2020, after countless hours gathering data from stakeholders and experts on this issue, the MMIW Task Force issued a 163 page report. The very first action the Task Force recommended was to create an MMIW Office to ensure that the MN Legislature and state agencies are held accountable for implementing the Report's mandates. It's time for the Minnesota Legislature to put its money where its mouth is and create and fund the MMIW Office. As (Chair/Ranking Minority Member/Vice Chair) of the Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee, I am disappointed that you chose not to include this bill in the Public Safety Omnibus Bill and ask that you hold hearings on the bill.

2. Your State Senator

Sample Script: My name is (insert name). I live at (insert address) and I am a constituent. I am calling you regarding SF1989, the MMIW Office Bill. In 2019 there was unanimous bipartisan support to create the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's Task force to investigate ways to stop the

disproportionate and horrific violence suffered by MMIW in Minnesota. In late 2020, after countless hours gathering data from stakeholders and experts on this issue, the MMIW Task Force issued a 163 page report. The very first action the Task Force recommended was to create an MMIW Office to ensure that the MN Legislature and state agencies are held accountable for implementing the Report's mandates. It's time for the Minnesota Legislature to put its money where its mouth is and create and fund the MMIW Office. I ask that you do everything you can to make sure that this bill is included in the Senate Public Safety Omnibus as it is in the House's Public Safety Omnibus Bill.