

TO: Minnesota House of Representatives Committee on Labor, Industry, Veterans and Military Affairs Finance and Policy  
FROM: An Garagiola-Bernier  
DATE: March 18, 2021  
RE: HF 1042 Protecting Indigenous Cultural Practices

Dear Chairman Ecklund and Members of the Committee;

My name is An Garagiola-Bernier. I am a descendant of the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa, a Masters of Public Policy candidate at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs, and mother of three currently residing in Hugo. Thank you for your service and for accepting my written testimony.

I am writing today to ask for your support in advocating for bill HF 1042, legislation to Protect Indigenous Cultural Practices. As you know, this bill creates an exemption process for Indigenous building practices from MN building codes. I urge the committee to respect American Indians' civil rights and uphold the American Indian Religious Freedom Act by securing the passage of this bipartisan legislation.

My family has also been volunteering at Zani Otunwe since last fall. This community aims to construct a village of earth lodges on Dakota-owned land in traditional Dakota ways. It has been an honor to watch my children learn about traditional Dakota lifeways from Dr. Waziyatawin and contribute honest, hard days' work to the project. You will read testimony from my son Jack, who is 13, and helped dig holes for a fence. These lessons blend history, culture, and valuable life skills into something meaningful to my son. I want Dakota children to have Zani Otunwe as a place they can experience this. However, work was halted because earth lodges do not meet MN building codes.

As a policy student, I have had the opportunity to volunteer with Makoce Ikikcupi, the Dakota land reclamation project. As a student of social and federal Indian policy, I am saddened that our State building codes do not protect American Indian Civil Rights, and are in contradiction of the American Indian Freedom of Religion Act.

I look forward to discussing this issue with you further, should you have any questions. I can be reached by phone at 651-235-4175 or email at [garag006@umn.edu](mailto:garag006@umn.edu).

Chi Miigwech. Thank you for your time and continued support.

An Garagiola-Bernier  
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