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FIRST ENGROSSMENT

Sixty-eighth Legislative Assembly of North Dakota

ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL NO. 1536

Introduced by

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Representatives Davis, Conmy, Finley-DeVille, Hager, Henderson, Klemin, Pyle, Rohr, Weisz Senator Luick

- 1 A BILL for an Act to create and enact a new subsection to section 27-20.3-19 sections
- 2 27-20.3-19.1, 27-20.3-19.2, 27-20.3-19.3, 27-20.3-19.4, and 27-20.3-19.5 of the North Dakota
- 3 Century Code, relating to <u>adopting a state</u> Indian child welfare <u>act; to amend and reenact</u>
- 4 section 27-20.3-19 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to Indian child welfare; and to
- 5 provide for a legislative management study.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:

7 SECTION 1. A new subsection to section 27-20.3-19 of the North Dakota Century Code is 8 created and enacted as follows: 9 Foster care or preadoptive placements - Criteria - Preferences. 10 An Indian child accepted for foster care or preadoptive placement must be placed in 11 the least restrictive setting that most approximates a family and which meets the 12 child's special needs, if any. The child must be placed within reasonable proximity to 13 the child's home, taking into account any special needs of the child. In any foster care 14 or preadoptive placement, a preference must be given, in the absence of good cause-15 to the contrary, to a placement with: 16 A member of the Indian child's extended family; 17 A foster home licensed, approved, or specified by the Indian child's tribe; 18 An Indian foster home licensed or approved by an authorized non-Indian 19 licensing authority; or 20 An institution for children approved by an Indian tribe operated by an Indian 21 organization which has a program suitable to meet the Indian child's needs. 22 **SECTION 1. AMENDMENT.** Section 27-20.3-19 of the North Dakota Century Code is 23 amended and reenacted as follows:

27-20.3-19. Indian child welfare - Active efforts and procedures.

- 1. As used in this section and sections 27-20.3-19.1 through 27-20.3-19.5:
 - a. "Act" means this section and sections 27-20.3-19.2 through 27-20.3-19.5.
 - primarily to maintain or reunite an Indian child with the Indian child's family. Active efforts required of the federal Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 [25 U.S.C. 1901 through 1963] apply or may apply, including during the verification process. If an agency is involved in the child-custody proceeding, active efforts must involve assisting the parent or parentsa parent or Indian custodian throughwith the steps of a case plan and withincluding accessing or developing the resources necessary to satisfy the case plan. To the maximum extent possible, active efforts should be provided in a manner consistent with the prevailing social and cultural conditions and way of life of the Indian child's tribe and should be conducted in partnership with the Indian child and the Indian child's parents, extended family members, Indian custodians, and tribe. Active efforts are to be tailored to the facts and circumstances of the case. The term includes:
 - (1) Conducting a comprehensive assessment of the circumstances of the Indian child's family, with a focus on safe reunification as the most desirable goal, with ongoing timely assessment to determine when the threat is resolved and placement of the <u>Indian</u> child can be returned to the custodian.
 - (2) Identifying appropriate services and helping the parents a parent or Indian custodian to overcome barriers, including actively assisting the parents a parent or Indian custodian in obtaining such services.
 - (3) Identifying, notifying, and inviting representatives of the Indian child's tribe to participate in providing support and services to the Indian child's family and in family team meetings, permanency planning, and resolution of placement issues.
 - (4) Conducting or causing to be conducted a diligent search for the Indian child's extended family members, and contacting and consulting with extended family members to provide family structure and support for the Indian child and the Indian child's parentsparent or Indian custodian.

1 (5) Offering and employing available and culturally appropriate family 2 preservation strategies and facilitating the use of remedial and rehabilitative 3 services provided by the <u>Indian</u> child's tribe. 4 Taking steps to keep siblings together, if possible. (6) 5 Supporting regular visits with parents parent or Indian custodians custodians (7) 6 in the most natural setting possible as well as trial home visits of the Indian 7 child during any period of removal, consistent with the need to ensure the 8 health, safety, and welfare of the <u>Indian</u> child. 9 (8) Identifying community resources, including housing, financial, 10 transportation, mental health, substance abuse, and peer support services 11 and actively assisting the Indian child's parentsparent or Indian custodian or, 12 as appropriate, the <u>Indian</u> child's family, in utilizing and accessing those 13 resources. 14 Monitoring progress and participation in services. (9)15 (10)Considering alternative ways to address the needs of the Indian child's 16 parentsparent or Indian custodian and where appropriate, the family, if the 17 optimum services do not exist or are not available. 18 Providing post-reunification services and monitoring. 19 "Adoptive placement" means the permanent placement of an Indian child for 20 adoption. 21 <u>d.</u> "Extended family member" means a relationship defined by the law or custom of 22 the Indian child's tribe or, in the absence of such law or custom, means an 23 individual who has reached the age of eighteen and who is the Indian child's 24 grandparent, aunt or uncle, brother or sister, brother-in-law or sister-in-law, niece 25 or nephew, first or second cousin, or stepparent. 26 "Foster care or non-foster care placement" means the removal of an Indian child 27 from the home of his or her parent or Indian custodian for temporary placement in 28 a foster home, qualified residential treatment program, residential care center for 29 Indian children and youth, or certified shelter care facility, in the home of a 30 relative other than a parent or Indian custodian, or in the home of a guardian, 31 from which placement the parent or Indian custodian cannot have the Indian child

1		returned upon demand. The term does not include an adoptive placement, a
2		preadoptive placement, or emergency change in placement under section
3		27-20.3-06 or holding an Indian child in custody.
4	<u>f.</u>	"Indian" means an individual who is a member of an Indian tribe, or who is a
5		native and a member of a regional corporation as defined under 43 U.S.C. 1606.
6	d. g.	"Indian child" means any unmarried individual who is under the age of eighteen
7		and is either a member of an Indian tribe or is eligible for membership in an
8		Indian tribe and is the biological child of a member of an Indian tribe.
9	e. <u>h.</u>	"Indian child custody proceeding" means a proceeding brought by the state
10		<u>involving:</u>
11		(1) Foster care or non-foster care placement;
12		(2) A preadoptive placement;
13		(3) An adoptive placement; or
14		(4) A termination of parental rights under section 27-20.3-20 for an Indian child.
15	i.	"Indian child's tribe" means the Indian tribe in which an Indian child is a member
16		or eligible for membership or, in the case of an Indian child who is a member of or
17		eligible for membership in more than one tribe, the Indian tribe with which the
18		Indian child has the more significant contacts.
19	f. j	"Indian custodian" means any Indian individual who has legal custody of an
20		Indian child under tribal law or custom or under state law or to whom temporary
21		physical care, custody, and control has been transferred by the parent of the
22		Indian child.
23	g. k.	"Indian tribe" means an Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized Indian
24		group or community of Indians recognized as eligible for services provided to
25		Indians by the United States secretary of the interior because of their status as
26		Indians, including any Alaska native village as defined in 43 U.S.C. 1602(c).
27	h. l.	"Parent" means any a biological parent or parents of an Indian child or any an
28		Indian individual who has lawfully adopted an Indian child, including adoptions
29		under tribal law or custom. The term does not include the unwed father if
30		paternity has not been acknowledged or established.

- i.m. "Preadoptive placement" means the temporary placement of an Indian child in a foster home, home of a relative other than a parent or Indian custodian, or home of a guardian after a termination of parental rights but before or in lieu of an adoptive placement, but does not include an emergency change in placement under section 27-20.3-06.
 - n. "Termination of parental rights" means any action resulting in the termination of the parent-child relationship. It does not include a placement based upon an act by an Indian child which, if committed by an adult, would be deemed a crime or a placement upon award of custody to one of the <u>Indian</u> child's parents in a divorce proceeding.
- 2. Before removal of an Indian child from the custody of a parent or Indian custodian for purposes of involuntary foster care placement or the termination of parental rights over an Indian child, the court shall find that active efforts have been made to provide remedial services and rehabilitative services designed to prevent the breakup of the Indian family and that these efforts have proved unsuccessful. The court may not order the removal unless evidence of active efforts shows there has been a vigorous and concerted level of casework beyond the level that would constitute reasonable efforts under section 27-20.3-26. Reasonable efforts may not be construed to be active efforts. Active efforts must be made in a manner that takes into account the prevailing social and cultural values, conditions, and way of life of the Indian child's tribe. Active efforts must utilize the available resources of the Indian child's extended family, tribe, tribal and other relevant social service agencies, and individual Indian caregivers.
- 3. The court may order the removal of the Indian child for involuntary foster care placement only if the court determines, by clear and convincing evidence, that continued custody of the Indian child by the parent or Indian custodian is likely to result in serious emotional or physical damage to the Indian child. Evidence must show a causal relationship between the particular conditions in the home and the likelihood that continued custody of the Indian child will result in serious emotional or physical damage to the particular Indian child who is the subject of the proceeding. Poverty, isolation, custodian age, crowded or inadequate housing, substance use, or

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- nonconforming social behavior does not by itself constitute clear and convincing evidence of imminent serious emotional or physical damage to the Indian_child. As soon as the threat has been removed and the Indian_child is no longer at risk, the state should terminate the removal, by returning the Indian_child to the parent while offering a solution to mitigate the situation that gave rise to the need for emergency removal and placement.
- 4. The court may only order the termination of parental rights over the Indian child only if the court determines, by evidence beyond a reasonable doubt that continued custody of the Indian child by the parent or Indian custodian is likely to result in serious emotional or physical damage to the Indian child.
 - In considering whether to involuntarily place an Indian child in foster care or to terminate the parental rights of the parent of an Indian child, the court shall require that a qualified expert witness must be qualified to testify regarding whether the Indian child's continued custody by the parent or Indian custodian is likely to result in serious emotional or physical damage to the Indian child and should be qualified to testify as to the prevailing social and cultural standards of the Indian child's tribe. An individual may be designated by the Indian child's tribe as being qualified to testify to the prevailing social and cultural standards of the Indian child's tribe. If the parties stipulate in writing and the court is satisfied the stipulation is made knowingly, intelligently, and voluntarily, the court may accept a declaration or affidavit from a qualified expert witness in lieu of testimony. The court or any party may request the assistance of the Indian child's tribe or the bureau of Indian affairs office serving the Indian child's tribe in locating individuals qualified to serve as expert witnesses. The social worker regularly assigned to the Indian child may not serve as a qualified expert witness in child-custody proceedings concerning the Indian child. The qualified expert witness should be someone familiar with the particular Indian child and have contact with the parentsparent or Indian custodian to observe interaction between the parents parent or Indian custodian, the Indian child, and extended family members. The child welfare agency and courts should facilitate access to the family and records to facilitate accurate testimony.

1	6.	An emergency removal or placement of an Indian child under state law must terminate			
2		immediately when the removal or placement is no longer necessary to prevent			
3		imminent physical damage or harm to the Indian child.			
4	7.	To facilitate the intent of the act, the agency, in cooperation with the Indian child's tribe			
5		of affiliation, unless a parent objects, shall take steps to enroll the Indian child in the			
6		tribe with the goal of finalizing enrollment before termination.			
7	SEC	CTION 2. Section 27-20.3-19.1 of the North Dakota Century Code is created and			
8	enacted	as follows:			
9	27-2	20.3-19.1. Indian child welfare - Jurisdiction over custody proceedings.			
10	1.	The act includes requirements that apply if an Indian child is the subject of:			
11		a. A child-custody proceeding, including:			
12		(1) An involuntary proceeding; and			
13		(2) A voluntary proceeding that could prohibit the parent or Indian custodian			
14		from regaining custody of the Indian child upon demand.			
15		b. An emergency proceeding other than:			
16		(1) A tribal court proceeding; or			
17		(2) A proceeding regarding a delinquent act.			
18		c. An award of custody of the Indian child to one of the parents, including an award			
19		in a divorce proceeding; or			
20		d. A voluntary placement that either parent, both parents, or the Indian custodian			
21		has, of his or her or their free will, without a threat of removal by a state agency,			
22		chosen for the Indian child and that does not operate to prohibit the Indian child's			
23		parent or Indian custodian from regaining custody of the Indian child upon			
24		demand.			
25	2.	If a proceeding under subsection 1 concerns an Indian child, the act applies to that			
26		proceeding. In determining whether the act applies to a proceeding, the state court			
27		may not consider factors such as the participation of a parent or the Indian child in			
28		tribal cultural, social, religious, or political activities; the relationship between the Indian			
29		child and the Indian child's parent; whether the parent ever had custody of the Indian			
30		child: or the Indian child's blood quantum			

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audiovisual means, by hearing the evidence or testimony at a location that is convenient to the parties and witnesses, or by use of other means permissible under the tribal court's rules of evidence.

- 6. An Indian child's tribe may intervene at any point in an Indian child custody proceeding.
- 7. The state shall give full faith and credit to the public acts, records, and judicial proceedings of an Indian tribe which are applicable to an Indian child custody proceeding to the same extent that the state gives full faith and credit to the public acts, records, and judicial proceedings of any other governmental entity.

SECTION 3. Section 27-20.3-19.2 of the North Dakota Century Code is created and enacted as follows:

27-20.3-19.2. Indian child welfare - Court proceedings.

- In a proceeding involving the foster care or non-foster care placement of or termination of parental rights to an Indian child whom the court knows or has reason to know may be an Indian child, the party seeking the foster care or non-foster care placement or termination of parental rights, for the first hearing of the proceeding, shall notify the Indian child's parent, Indian custodian, and tribe, by registered mail, return receipt requested, of the pending proceeding and of the parties' right to intervene in the proceeding and shall file the return receipt with the court. Notice of subsequent hearings in a proceeding must be in writing and may be given by mail, personal delivery, facsimile transmission, or electronic mail. If the identity or location of the Indian child's parent, Indian custodian, or tribe cannot be determined, that notice shall be given to the United States secretary of the interior in like manner. The first hearing in the proceeding may not be held until at least ten days after receipt of the notice by the parent, Indian custodian, and tribe or at least fifteen days after receipt of the notice by the United States secretary of the interior. On request of the parent, Indian custodian, or tribe, the court shall grant a continuance of up to twenty additional days to enable the requester to prepare for that hearing.
- 2. Each party to a child custody proceeding of an Indian child has the right to examine all reports or other documents filed with the court upon which a decision with respect to

 the out-of-home care placement, termination of parental rights, or return of custody may be based.

SECTION 4. Section 27-20.3-19.3 of the North Dakota Century Code is created and enacted as follows:

27-20.3-19.3. Indian child welfare - Voluntary proceedings - Consent - Withdrawal.

- A voluntary consent by a parent or Indian custodian to a foster care or non-foster care placement of an Indian child is not valid unless the consent or delegation is executed in writing, recorded before a judge, and accompanied by a written certification by the judge that the terms and consequences of the consent or delegation were fully explained in detail to and were fully understood by the parent or Indian custodian. The judge also shall certify the parent or Indian custodian fully understood the explanation in English or that the explanation was interpreted into a language the parent or Indian custodian understood. Any consent or delegation of powers given under this subsection before or within ten days after the birth of the Indian child is not valid. A parent or Indian custodian who has executed a consent or delegation of powers under this subsection may withdraw the consent or delegation for any reason at any time, and the Indian child must be returned to the parent or Indian custodian. A parent or Indian custodian who has executed a consent or delegation of powers under this subsection also may move to invalidate the out-of-home care placement.
- 2. A voluntary consent by a parent to a termination of parental rights under subdivision d of section 27-20.3-20 is not valid unless the consent is executed in writing, recorded before a judge, and accompanied by a written certification by the judge that the terms and consequences of the consent were fully explained in detail to and were fully understood by the parent. The judge also shall certify the parent fully understood the explanation in English or that the explanation was interpreted into a language that the parent understood. Consent given under this subsection before or within ten days after the birth of the Indian child is not valid. A parent who has executed a consent under this subsection may withdraw the consent for any reason at any time before the entry of a final order terminating parental rights, and the Indian child must be returned to the Indian child's parent.

1 SECTION 5. Section 27-20.3-19.4 of the North Dakota Century Code is created and 2 enacted as follows: 3 27-20.3-19.4. Indian child welfare - Placements preferences. 4 Subject to subsections 3 and 4, in placing an Indian child for adoption or in delegating 5 powers, as described in a lawful executed power of attorney regarding an Indian child, 6 preference must be given, in the absence of good cause, as described in 7 subsection 6, to the contrary, to a placement with or delegation to one of the following, 8 in the order of preference listed: 9 An extended family member of the Indian child; 10 Another member of the Indian child's tribe; 11 Another Indian family with whom the Indian child has a relationship or an Indian 12 family from a tribe that is culturally similar to or linguistically connected to the 13 Indian child's tribe: or 14 The tribe's statutory adopted placement preferences. 15 An Indian child who is accepted for a foster care or non-foster care placement or a 16 preadoptive placement must be placed in the least restrictive setting that most 17 approximates a family that meets the Indian child's special needs, if any, and which is 18 within reasonable proximity to the Indian child's home, taking into account those 19 special needs. Subject to subsections 4 and 6, in placing an Indian child in a foster 20 care or non-foster care placement or a preadoptive placement, preference must be 21 given, in the absence of good cause, as described in subsection 6, to the contrary, to a 22 placement in one of the following, in the order of preference listed: 23 The home of an extended family member of the Indian child; 24 b. A foster home licensed, approved, or specified by the Indian child's tribe; 25 An Indian foster home licensed or approved by the department; or C. 26 A qualified residential treatment facility or residential care center for children and 27 youth approved by an Indian tribe or operated by an Indian organization that has 28 a program suitable to meet the needs of the Indian child. 29 An Indian child who is the subject of an emergency removal or placement under a 30 child custody determination under section 27-20.3-06 must be placed in compliance 31 with foster care or non-foster care placement or preadoptive placement preferences,

1			(2)	The request of the Indian child, if the Indian child is of sufficient age and
2				capacity to understand the decision being made.
3			(3)	The presence of a sibling attachment that can be maintained only through a
4				particular placement.
5			(4)	The extraordinary physical, mental, or emotional needs of the Indian child,
6				such as specialized treatment services that may be unavailable in the
7				community where families who meet the placement preferences live.
8			(5)	The unavailability of a suitable placement after a determination by the court
9				that a diligent search was conducted to find suitable placements meeting
10				the preference criteria, but none has been located. For purposes of this
11				analysis, the standards for determining whether a placement is unavailable
12				must conform to the prevailing social and cultural standards of the Indian
13				community in which the Indian child's parent, Indian custodian, or extended
14				family resides or with which the Indian child's parent, Indian custodian, or
15				extended family members maintain social and cultural ties.
16		d.	A pl	acement may not depart from the preferences based on the socioeconomic
17			stati	us of any placement relative to another placement.
18		e.	A pl	acement may not depart from the preferences based solely on ordinary
19			bon	ding or attachment that flowed from time spent in a nonpreferred placement
20			that	was made in violation of the act.
21		f.	The	burden of establishing good cause to depart from the order of placement
22			pref	erence is on the party requesting that departure.
23	7.	The	depa	artment or a child welfare agency shall maintain a record of each adoptive
24		plad	<u>cemer</u>	nt, foster care or non-foster care placement, preadoptive placement, and
25		dele	egatio	on of powers, made of an Indian child, evidencing the efforts made to comply
26		with	the p	placement preference requirements specified in this section, and shall make
27		that	reco	rd available at any time on the request of the United States secretary of the
28		inte	rior o	r the Indian child's tribe.
29	SECTION 6. Section 27-20.3-19.5 of the North Dakota Century Code is created and			
30	enacted as follows:			

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the 2023-24 interim, the legislative management shall consider studying the implications of codifying the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 [25 U.S.C. 1901 et seq.]implementation of sections 27-20.3-19 through 27-20.3-19.5. The study must include a review of the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 [25 U.S.C. 1901 et seq.], section 27-20.3-19, federal statutes related to Indian child welfare, related relevant case law, and input from stakeholders. The legislative management shall report its findings and recommendations, together with any legislation necessary to implement the recommendations, to the sixty-ninth legislative assembly.