

1 A MEMORIAL

2 REQUESTING THE INDIAN AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT AND THE COMMISSION  
3 ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN TO STUDY AND DEVELOP A STATEWIDE PLAN  
4 OF ACTION TO ADDRESS THE FORMER GOVERNMENT POLICY OF FORCED  
5 OR COERCED STERILIZATION OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND OTHER WOMEN  
6 OF COLOR IN NEW MEXICO AND TO LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR A STATE  
7 TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION, A MEMORIAL TO VICTIMS OF  
8 FORCED OR COERCED STERILIZATION AND STATE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF  
9 THE INHUMANITY OF THE GRIEVOUS POLICY.

10  
11 WHEREAS, between 1907 and 2018, Indigenous women and  
12 other women of color across the United States, including in  
13 New Mexico, were subjected to forced or coerced  
14 sterilizations without their free, prior and informed  
15 consent, often through the federal bureau of Indian affairs  
16 and its contracted health care or the bureau's successor, the  
17 Indian health service and its direct services and  
18 purchased-referred care, which includes physicians and other  
19 health care providers, private practices, clinics and  
20 institutions; and

21 WHEREAS, investigations in the 1970s revealed that  
22 between twenty-five and fifty percent of Indigenous women of  
23 childbearing age had been sterilized, with some of the  
24 highest concentrations of procedures occurring in the Indian  
25 health service regions of Albuquerque and the broader

1 southwest; and

2 WHEREAS, federal and independent inquiries, including  
3 those conducted by the United States government  
4 accountability office in 1976 and Indigenous researchers,  
5 such as Dr. Connie Pinkerman-Uri (Choctaw/Cherokee), have  
6 documented widespread violations of medical ethics and human  
7 rights, including sterilizations performed on girls and women  
8 under duress or without being given full information about  
9 the sterilization procedure and its consequences, or even  
10 without any permission being sought; and

11 WHEREAS, these acts constitute grave violations of  
12 fundamental human rights, including the rights to health,  
13 bodily autonomy, family and freedom from torture or cruel,  
14 inhuman or degrading treatment, as recognized under the  
15 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the *Convention on*  
16 *the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*  
17 adopted by the United Nations general assembly and the *Rome*  
18 *Statute of the International Criminal Court*, which classifies  
19 forced sterilization as a crime against humanity; and

20 WHEREAS, the reproductive violence perpetrated against  
21 Indigenous women through forced or coerced sterilization has  
22 caused historical and generational trauma, demographic loss  
23 and cultural devastation, harms that many legal scholars and  
24 human rights experts argue rise to the level of genocide; and

25 WHEREAS, New Mexico, as a state with a majority-minority

1 population and a deep legacy of Indigenous leadership, bears  
2 a moral and historical responsibility to confront this  
3 unacknowledged chapter of United States and state history;  
4 and

5 WHEREAS, transitional justice frameworks, including  
6 truth commissions established in Canada, South Africa and the  
7 state of Maine, demonstrate that processes of truth-telling,  
8 reparative justice and institutional reform can support  
9 healing communities and restore public trust in government;  
10 and

11 WHEREAS, the establishment of a New Mexico memorial to  
12 the victims of forced or coerced sterilization and the  
13 creation of a truth and reconciliation commission would make  
14 New Mexico the first state in the nation to formally  
15 investigate, acknowledge and redress the full scope of these  
16 violations; and

17 WHEREAS, Indigenous women leaders, advocates and  
18 survivors, alongside scholars and health practitioners, are  
19 organizing to develop a Native American-led framework for  
20 culturally grounded reproductive justice and trauma-informed  
21 care to ensure such violations never occur again; and

22 WHEREAS, in 2025, during the United Nations  
23 permanent forum on the rights of Indigenous peoples, the  
24 American Indian movement-west delegation met with  
25 Dr. Albert K. Barume, the United Nations special rapporteur

1 on the rights of Indigenous peoples, to raise the issue of  
2 forced sterilization of Native American women and to call for  
3 a United Nations global study on the scale and scope of these  
4 crimes; and

5 WHEREAS, Dr. Barume has since agreed to undertake a  
6 visit to the United States, including a commitment to  
7 visit New Mexico, to meet with communities and survivors,  
8 engage with state and tribal officials and hold an  
9 international press conference on this issue, thereby  
10 positioning New Mexico as a focal point for global truth and  
11 healing;

12 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE  
13 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the Indian affairs department and  
14 the commission on the status of women be requested to conduct  
15 a comprehensive study into the history, scope and continuing  
16 impacts of forced and coerced sterilization of Indigenous  
17 women and other women of color in New Mexico; and

18 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the study:

19 A. identify all known and potential cases of  
20 forced or coerced sterilization conducted within New Mexico  
21 through United States Indian health service facilities and  
22 contracted physicians and other hospitals and clinics;

23 B. gather survivor testimony using trauma-informed  
24 and culturally safe protocols, in partnership with  
25 Indigenous-focused and Indigenous-community-led

1 organizations;

2 C. assess the availability and accessibility of  
3 reproductive health services for Indigenous women and other  
4 women of color in New Mexico today; and

5 D. review and recommend educational, policy and  
6 reparative measures to prevent future violations and promote  
7 community healing; and

8 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the department and the  
9 commission be requested to seek the advice and assistance of  
10 victims and family members of victims of forced or coerced  
11 sterilization, historians, social and health services  
12 practitioners and others knowledgeable about the treatment by  
13 government employees and agents against Indigenous women and  
14 other women of color and trauma-informed and culturally  
15 sensitive protocols to be used when discussing such treatment  
16 with victims and their families; and

17 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that upon completion of the  
18 study, the department and commission be requested to present  
19 their findings and recommendations to the governor and the  
20 legislature no later than December 31, 2027, including  
21 proposals for:

22 A. the establishment of a New Mexico truth and  
23 reconciliation commission on the forced or coerced  
24 sterilization of Indigenous women and other women of color;

25 B. the creation of a statewide Native American-led

1 reproductive justice and reproductive sovereignty program  
2 focused on culturally grounded health, education and healing  
3 services;

4 C. the development of a public memorial and  
5 educational curriculum to ensure enduring remembrance and  
6 education of this history; and

7 D. the acknowledgment by the state of the  
8 inhumanity of the grievous policy of forced or coerced  
9 sterilization of Indigenous women and other women of color;  
10 and

11 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be  
12 transmitted to the secretary of Indian affairs, the chair of  
13 the commission on the status of women, the governor, tribal  
14 governments in New Mexico, the interim legislative health and  
15 human services committee and the interim legislative  
16 committee dealing with Indian affairs. \_\_\_\_\_

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