

May 20, 2021

Vote YES on SB21-116
Written testimony of Tracy Lefferdink

Dear Representatives:

With fervent dismay and urgency, I am writing to voice my strong support for SB21-116, a measure that will prohibit American Indian mascots in Colorado. This bill, long overdue, will ensure that Colorado students will be educated in a more equitable, inclusive, safe environment.

Soooooooooooo, fun fact—or kinda not-fun, but certainly relevant—in 1999, I graduated from Lamar High School. Yes, THAT Lamar, which has theeeee moooooost shameful and disgusting possible mascot name, ever: the Savages — a flagrant and shocking racial slur. I grimace even to write it, and abhor the thought that it is still being *chanted* and shouted at sporting events and the like. I am plenty guilty of having done so myself, of course, throughout the 90s. I did so with little thought and GREAT pride; I loved my high school (still do) and wanted to show it, simple as that. But I wish I knew then what I know now, which in this instance is actually quite simple: the distinction between Intent and Impact.

So! I invite you to kindly join me in a brief examination of Intent vs. Impact in the case of using Native Americans as mascots:

The **Intent** - being frothily and blindly defended by many, I am sure - is something along the lines of, “But we are HONORING Native Americans by using them as mascots! We have team pride! They’re cool! We love them, see???” [end of discussion; ears slammed shut.]” (Spoiler alert: booooooooooooo.)

The **Impact** has been clearly and continuously communicated by Native Americans for decades: that these practices are deeply dehumanizing and damaging. There are innumerable studies showing demonstrable harm; I trust you’ve examined them. Tens, perhaps hundreds of thousands have shared their intense pain, as individuals, and also their collective grief, passed down and accumulating for hundreds of years.

And yet, time and time again, their voices are ignored, invalidated, silenced. And so their hurt increases. The message they receive, over and over, is, “You. Do. Not. Matter.”

I ask you now: who do you (yes, YOU, personally) think should be heard? The voices telling you their pain?—showing you legions of oppressed and depressed youths and their undeniably higher suicide rates?—pointing to hundreds of years of not merely oppression, but outright genocide? OR – the group arguing that their *sports teams stay the same*. Which, again, is PROVEN to cause cyclical, generational pain and DEATH. Death! (That, after everything Native Americans have been through?!) Yyyeeeahhhh... the sheer magnitude of difference could not possibly be greater.

And it could not be clearer whose voices matter more.

Continuing to prioritize those belligerently crying out to retain the mascots and slurs will only cause more pain. It also teaches ALL children that it is perfectly acceptable to disrespect and oppress their fellow human beings. Our kids – especially Native youths – deserve better than that. They deserve to grow up during an era of positive historic shifts that lift the stories and voices of those who, for centuries, have been not only silenced but systematically annihilated. They deserve a world where RIGHT NOW big changes are being made that stamp out these archaic efforts to keep society stagnant and harmful to the ones already suffering the most.

And you can HELP.

For allllllllllllllllllllll these reasons (and more! – let’s talk!), I am proud to support State Representatives Adrienne Benavidez (HD 32) and Barbara McLachlan (HD 59) in their efforts to enact positive change for Colorado students and thus implore that you vote YES on this legislation. Vote with your heart (aaaaaaaand probably also with a keen bit o’ awareness that history’s eyes are on you).

We CAN work together to diminish this horrific generational pain. It is time.

Signed,

Tracy Lynn Lefferdink

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Yo! Please consider the environment before printing this email.



Madame Chairwoman McLachlan, Vice-Chair Young, and esteemed members of the House Education Committee,

My name is Krista Spurgin, and I'm the Executive Director for Stand for Children, a non-profit advocacy organization focused on ensuring all students receive a high quality, relevant education, especially those whose boundless potential is overlooked and under-tapped because of their skin color, zip code, first language, or disability. Recently, we have changed our mission in advocacy to be intentionally and actively anti-racist.

We believe that our country, our schools, and our kids deserve an education where they are taught so much more than to "be colorblind". They deserve to live in a place where our different races, ethnicities and cultures are celebrated for their colorful contributions to our country.

Which is why we so strongly support SB21-116. The Native American culture, history, and ethnic identity is not a mascot for sports, and it's long past time that we ban these outright offensive caricatures. Colorado is better than this, and let's teach our kids better than this. Vote yes on SB21-116.

Sincerely,

Krista Spurgin

5/19/2021

Lamar RE-2 Board of Education- Testimony on Senate Bill 21-116

Dear Madam Chair and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Lamar RE-2 School Board of Education, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on Senate Bill 21-116 which greatly impacts our school district.

Our current Board of Education recognizes the value of the recommendations made in the 2016 Governor's Commission to Study American Indian Representations in Public Schools. While we respect the recommendations contained within that study, we also have serious concerns about SB 21-116. First and foremost, we feel this bill is substantial overreach on local control and lacks a true accounting of the enormous fiscal impact the proposed changes will have on our school budget and ultimately how those fiscal impacts will affect our children and staff.

We believe this matter can and should be managed by the local Board of Education, as we represent the values and beliefs of our community. Though it may not be widely known, we feel it is important to note that following the release of the 2016 Commission Study, our district worked to connect with a Native American Tribe in an effort to establish a partnership, unfortunately to no avail. More recently, the Board of Education again reviewed the 2016 study and subsequently met with the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs director, Katherine Redhorse, in November 2020 in an effort to acquire technical assistance and support in connecting with and establishing a relationship with a Tribe, to enhance our educational curriculum on Native American studies, and possibly work to engage in a student exchange program with a Tribe. We also sought support in connecting with other schools that have successfully worked through this process. We have not yet been connected with a Colorado Tribe, but remain dedicated to doing so. As recent as earlier this month, our Mayor reached out (again) to Governor Reggie Wassana of the Cheyenne and Arapahoe Tribes in an attempt to open a line of communication. It is the goal of the city and the Board of Education to bring our two groups together to collaborate, communicate and educate.

Additionally, our district met with N.A.G.A (Native American Guardians Association) to discuss the requests that had been most recently made to undergo a logo change. N.A.G.A. agreed to review both the history of our logo and provide an opinion of the appropriateness of the imagery. N.A.G.A. has indicated that they supported the use of the Native American imagery both for the logo and the associated artwork at our school.

An equally pressing concern is the fiscal impact this will have on our school district. We have gathered estimates of the cost associated with changing the mascot and have found this to be between \$300,000-\$500,000. We are certain the House Education Committee can understand the substantial impact these expenditures would have on our small, rural school budget. Now is no time to impose such a mandate given the economic and budget uncertainties. We are still in the midst of a pandemic and do not yet know the long-term financial ripple effects of COVID-19. Spending like this will ultimately impact our children and staff. We have a responsibility to do our best to retain top talent, which is already a major challenge in rural areas and we simply cannot afford a budget hit like this.

While we do respectfully oppose this legislation, should this bill move forward we would request an opportunity to provide amendment language that would include financial assistance to impacted districts to help defray the costs associated with these changes. We also strongly encourage the acceptance of the amendments proposed by the Colorado Rural Alliance.

Sincerely,

Lamar RE-2 School Board.

05/18/2021
James Herman
2216 2th Ave Court
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970-302-4875

Testimony in opposition of: SB21-116

Dear Madame Chair and Honorable Members of the Education Committee,

My name is James Herman and I currently live in Greeley, CO. I am a proud third generation graduate of Yuma High School. I am honored to have been a Yuma Indian during my school years. I oppose this bill that calls for the Prohibition of American Indian Mascots.

The mascot for the school district in Yuma is not one of disrespect or dishonor. It is just the opposite and its roots can be traced to a Native American for which the city is named. In addition, there is a type of spear point used by Natives in the region thousands of years ago and with its modern discovery was named the Yuma Point. There are several of us graduates who were inspired to become more educated by the past and the story of the mascot. I have spent years reading and studying Native Americans and in the past have done presentations at local schools in the Greeley area.

Growing up on a ranch in the region we were often reminded of the Native Americans who had lived in the area with the discovery of an arrow head or other artifact. As most of you know there is a long history of Native Americans on the Eastern Plains of our great state. The use of the title Indians for the Yuma School District does nothing but honor this past history and the city's namesake.

Being a Yuma Indian made one a part of a tribe with a sense of belonging. We were proud of our mascot and the fact that it reflects a sense of dignity and respect. By introducing a sweeping law to outright prohibit Native mascots it will eliminate an incredible opportunity for an educational tool for schools to provide a deeper understanding of native cultures. Are there some Native mascots in the state that are not appropriate or culturally acceptable? Yes, but don't sweep all the mascots away because of a few that don't meet standards.

I urge you to oppose SB21-116, so that some schools in this state can truly honor the state's past and the early its early inhabitants.

My name is Mary (Duke) Jacobsen, and I am a proud Yuma Indian graduate from the Class of 1985. I enjoyed going to school there, I was a “transplant” into the high school as I transferred from a Denver school to Yuma in 9th grade. All I know is being a Yuma Indian and partaking in “Tribe Pride”. In addition to teaching at Yuma High School for 5 years, I had two kids who graduated as proud Indians and I spent many hours supporting their endeavors in the classroom, in Student Council, and on the athletic court. Please, I urge you to reconsider changing the mascot of a school that has meant so much to me, among others.

Tribe Pride encompasses everything that is good with Yuma High School. Athletics were not the only part of the Yuma Indian Tribe but so were the academic clubs. I was an FBLA adviser, and my members were supported by the whole school. Our success in FBLA was the school’s success; just as an athletic team’s success was celebrated by the whole school. We were all proud Indians.

I understand that most of the people on the committee that is hearing this bill is from the Front Range. Please know that growing up in a city or the suburbs is NOT the same as growing up in a small town. I urge you to think that it is possible that a small town does not always operate as a city does. This town is our identity; its identity is enmeshed with the high school. Even though I have been in my current position in a Wyoming school for 10 years, I am still a Yuma Indian at heart. I still have Indian swag that I wear with pride. Thanks to social media, I follow the teams, the clubs, the students. My friends still teach there. I love the school that I teach at currently, but being an Indian has taught me loyalty, integrity, team spirit and pride in something bigger than myself.

Whereas I cannot express my heartfelt desire to keep the Indian Mascot rightfully at the school that made it great for sentimentality reasons, I hope you look at the economics of it all. I know that it is always easier to spend other people’s money or require them to spend their money the way you see fit, the passing of this bill will create an unnecessarily huge burden on the school district and the community to create a new identity. If you force this school or any school to change its identity, I hope that you decide to foot the bill as well. Seems unreasonable that you would just hand down this decree then expect them to cover the enormous costs.

Please be above the fray and allow yourself to think that maybe the Yuma Indian is NOT the mascot to change. It is not discriminatory to the Native Americans; it is in fact for the honor of man that helped build the railroad on which the town was built.

Try, if you will, to visualize with me. You are on the High Plains and attending a pep rally. On nearly every surface of the school you see a chieftain in a feather headdress mounted on a horse with spear in hand. Now juxtapose this image with the mascot - a man in a loincloth and breeches who is wielding a tomahawk and pantomimes "scalping the enemy". His oversized head has red-hued skin and a prominent nose that wiggles comically. There are "war cries" consisting of people patting their open mouths as they whoop. Girls are dressed with a feather in their headband and boys with "war paint" on their faces are chanting. A song about Pocahontas – an east coast Algonquin – is being played by the band. ***There is a totem pole in the commons?***

You are standing in a place of learning that inexplicably doesn't bother to inform their student body that they have confused the cultures of dozens of tribes – some of whom formerly inhabited the land they stand on. If you are as clueless right now about what "proud" and "noble" tribe of Native American I'm describing, you aren't alone. Nobody in Lamar – home of just such a team and home to me - knows either. But that doesn't stop them from gathering stereotypes from many diverse cultures and melding them into one seriously offensive mascot. To add insult to...arguably lesser insult...they call themselves "The Savages". This is perhaps the most offensive name among all the Native American team mascots and is almost universally met with horror when explained outside the confines of Lamar.

My name is Season Hurd and I am an alumna of Lamar High School (2001). From the time I was a little girl at cheer camp, I was a "Savage". Nobody cared about the mascots of the elementary school I actually attended nor the Eagles of the local middle school. Oddly, the local community college was largely overlooked as well. There was only an awareness of the Savage. I made a huge flag with the mascot's head and S-A-V-A-G-E-S was one of the first words I learned to spell thanks to a cheer I had to recite. The town around me lived and breathed high school football. So it's no wonder that the local mascot became hopelessly conflated with feelings of pride and community instead of what the name should evoke – shame for our racially charged regional history and shame for our specific ignorance in perpetuating it.

It's also very clear why the citizens of Lamar will not change the mascot without the involvement of our state governing bodies. I implore you to use your authority to help accomplish what we all know is morally right but difficult for those entrenched in the culture to say aloud. Native American mascots are inherently racist and inappropriate for use in publicly funded institutions. Ban them in Colorado.

You will hear a lot of testimony today on age old talking points in the Lamar area. I have provided some of them below that I have heard repeatedly over the decades and what I feel are level-headed and appropriate counterarguments to my former townspeople.

1. But it's a "Noble" Savage. They should feel honored!

Simply placing what would be a compliment in front of a slur doesn't negate the slur. If anything it makes the compliment seem like a thinly veiled secondary insult. As if THIS "savage" is one of the rare, noble ones. I would invite you to replace "savage" with any other historically used racial epithet and see how much difference adding "noble" makes to the seriously uncomfortable feeling you get.

Probably the most telling thing would be to say out loud, "Noble (Whatever Your Ethnicity or Religion)." Now try to picture what the "costume" for that would be so that everyone could immediately recognize what was being represented. It would likely draw upon and heavily accentuate the very worst features and widely known stereotypes. Correct? What would our rival schools do to your image or infer about your heritage to intimidate the opposing team? Because no matter how much a school honors their mascot, rival schools will find a way to undermine it. Are you feeling honored and respected as a "mascot" yet?

2. The word "savage" has many meanings.

Okay, I'll bite. It's even used in current slang as someone who is uninhibited. But that doesn't change the way people think of that word when it's used next to a picture of a Native American chief. It gets clearer yet when the school's physical mascot is a caricature built of racist stereotypes from 300 years ago and the pep rally posters threaten to scalp the opposing team with cutesy tomahawks. Over the years a great deal of the racist imagery has been removed, but it was *clearly* the original intent.

We can't claim ignorance of what it means to be a Native American in Colorado when we drive by the Sand Creek Massacre site on our way to tournaments. As it has been used historically regarding Native Americans, "savage" is a heavily charged slur aimed at dehumanizing Native Americans. Making them seem feral and subhuman allowed settlers to steal from, enslave, rape, and murder the indigenous population without recourse. This is not a petty squabble over interpretation, but a very well known and ugly stain on our history. No matter what happy school memories you may have, THAT is what other people are thinking about when they hear our name. I wouldn't want even one person having the feelings that come with that history when they look at my alma mater and the promising minds attending it.

3. The majority of us don't think it's in bad taste.

It's not up to the majority, a vote, or the voice of anyone but the victim as to whether they are hurt or not. I'm sure we've all been in a position where someone is deeply offensive to us and we're told, "Don't be so sensitive." It is doubly hurtful when the person not only fails to acknowledge that they have hurt you, but is now placing additional shame on you for not reacting how THEY think YOU should. If someone tells you that something you are doing disrespects and hurts them, it shouldn't matter if 1000 unrelated people think it's okay. It's not anyone's place to tell other people when they are allowed to feel diminished or threatened. It's our job to listen. It's our job to inform others how we feel so that they aren't inadvertently hurting us and jeopardizing a relationship that may be important to them. It's our job to help each other rise. We are better than telling the minority among us to shut up and laugh along at the jokes being made at their expense – all the while wearing their mantle and not knowing what it means. Which brings me to...

3. Everyone is trying to erase our history.

I'm about to be very blunt here. It takes an enormous amount of gall to say that altering a Native American chief as a *HIGH SCHOOL MASCOT* would be bastardizing *YOUR* cultural identity. Telling the actual Native Americans that they "don't understand" the honor and nobility of our weakly appropriated and utterly generic mascot is heinous. (Seriously, what tribe is he supposed to be from anyway?) But implying that anyone is "erasing history" is the most deeply offensive part of all. Our school's history is a drop in the bucket compared to the history of Native Americans in this area. It's erasing *THEIR* history to appropriate their imagery and ultimately change its meaning along the way. All that will remain of their very real culture is the parts of it that satisfy the mascot's story. It's disgusting, frankly.

4. Other people don't get it. Down here it means something different and we feel proud of our school.

First of all, good! You should feel proud – of your school and the people who make it what it is. I'm proud of what I did during my time at LHS. None of that pride in who we are or what we have been capable of would be diminished by having an inoffensive mascot. But I fear that in the eyes of others it IS DIMINISHED by the one we have now. When people think of our school and our community, I want them to think of our accomplishments, not our bullheaded and inappropriate allegiance to symbolism. Honestly, school mascots wouldn't matter in a social vacuum. They exist to identify ourselves against opposing institutions. So pretending that only our perception of our mascot matters is wrong. It's literally how we represent ourselves to outsiders.

It's true – people from outside SE Colorado DON'T GET IT. When I tell people what my mascot was, 9/10 times I get a cringe or a gasp. A Native American mascot is pretty frowned upon but the name "Savage" is just plain indefensible. We really cranked it up to 11 with that one! People walk away from every conversation, news story, etc. where LHS is mentioned with that bewildered disgust in their heads instead of understanding what the community has accomplished. Maybe "savage" would be okay if nobody ever left Lamar or talked about Lamar outside of its city limits. But Lamar's youth is heading to places all over the state (sometimes the world). They will encounter a wealth of diversity as they represent LHS. When someone sees their letter jacket, they should see their accomplishments. Instead they stop at "Savages".

We can and should do better than to send kids out into the world emblazoned with an antiquated racial slur.

5. Why is everyone so "PC" and easily offended these days?

Crazy thought, but people have always been hurt and offended by being stereotyped or harassed. And people like myself have been offended on others behalf as well but were too timid to speak up. It's only now becoming more acceptable and safe to voice these feelings. I regret that I didn't use my voice to speak up for others many times in the past. I am ashamed that I took some of these slurs and repeated them without understanding how much I hurt people I genuinely respect and care about. I will never be able to apologize enough, nor regain what I lost with them. But I can do better. We can all do better.

Ultimately changing the mascot will not in any tangible way harm you or your family. But if keeping it is hurtful for people in the community or Lamar's image in the world at large, shouldn't we think about a change? Is this the hill we die on? Is squabbling over a mascot our biggest legacy?

To Whom It May Concern:

I write to you in support of SB21-116, to help Colorado as a state to help unify the state and its support of indigenous people.

One of my first distinct memories as a child was in 1st grade, teaching myself how to draw the school mascot and the pride I felt in the Yuma Indian. Throughout childhood I constantly created artwork, participated in sports, and as a community member projected the school mascot to the world. Then I went to college, travelled the country and my world view shifted...

I have opened my eyes to the social biases that I as a privileged white male have had in life. I actively try to understand my past actions and how they effected other social groups, whether intended or not. Honestly, if Bill SB21-116 had come to the legislature when I was in high school I might've been here giving testimony to stop this bill becoming law. As a rural community, Yuma, Colorado holds their school mascot as part of their social identity. They are trying to bulldoze through this social issue to their own end. Their argument is that they honor the indigenous people with their mascot, and the community proudly brandishes the mascot on all of their uniforms, gear, etc.

I have lived across the country from the melting pot of NYC to rural Washington State and experienced multiple cultures with no foreknowledge of their practices/customs. From these experiences, I believe that the Yuma community has put blinders on toward the larger issue: They say that the mascot honors the Indian, but the subtle actions of the community prove that in fact they don't. We as a country honor many things with specific holidays from Presidents Day to the 4th of July: Each holiday's history and meaning are taught within the school system. During my entire childhood, I was never taught anything substantive about my school mascot: The history of the actual tribe, why/how we honor them with our mascot. Instead, I believe the mascot, unconsciously or consciously has become an effigy of a subculture of people. We have created this idea of an entire people, never educating ourselves of their customs/beliefs, and put this mascot on a pedestal to display to the world. This ignorance of customs means that the community is also ignorant of their implicit biases towards said culture, and do not understand how some of their actions are disrespectful toward Indian culture as a whole.

I write to you in support of SB21-116, to help Colorado as a state to help unify the state and its support of indigenous people. We as a State and Country have far-too-long ignored our past actions and the impact those actions have had on many subcultures. Today, you have it in your hands to take a step towards equality and honoring these cultures by discontinuing the use the Indian as a mascot. The American Indian should be honored, and we should educate ourselves of their vast history and culture. The image of the American Indian as a mascot is demeaning and unnecessary and its use within school systems should end.

House Education

05/20/2021 01:30 PM

SB21-116 Prohibit American Indian Mascots

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Crystal Nelson Against Self	The mascot for the Yuma Indians has historical significance because the town of Yuma was named after a Native American. The cost to change the mascot is significant and the funds would be better used to improve the education of the students in Yuma. The term "Roll Tribe" is used enthusiastically to encourage students in academic and athletic pursuits. The Yuma Indian mascot has been a source of pride for generations of Yuma students and citizens and is in no way a negative term. Please vote against this measure.
Tom Westfall Against Self	i am a 1970 graduate of Yuma High School. We were the Yuma Indians, and were proud to have an association with the people that first lived on the land we now live upon. Yuma's mascot was originally the "Cornhuskers" but subsequent to the discovery of "Ancient Man" points in Yuma County (and the exploration of these sites by The Peabody Museum of Harvard) a group of people petitioned to change the mascot in order to HONOR those that came before us and left stone echoes of their time here. I believe that I am enlightened enough to understand the issue relative to mascots, but eliminating this particular one would be counter to its intent. I would propose a compromise solution. Allow 2 years for communities with Native American mascots to work out arrangements with various Native American organizations--affiliations, so that there is no mistake that the mascot is done to HONOR, not denigrate anyone. If after 2 years, no agreement has been reached, then perhaps the ban could be enacted. There isn't discrimination nor bullying against Native America youth in this community. My children's mother was 1/4 Native American and she was proud of the Yuma Mascot. My children attended Yuma schools up through middle school and still are proud to be "Indians". Thank-you for the opportunity to weigh in on this important matter.
Teresa Mekelburg Against Self	Our family have been proud Yuma Indians for 5 generations and honored to be able to represent the honored man who our town is named after, Yuma who was a Native American, our town has always be very respectful and proud of our history as Indians and have never shown them in a negative way, in an economy where schools are short on funds anyway to make a school spend over 200,000 to change a mascot is not a very sound idea for our State, pleas allow our proud tradition to continue
Wendy Wyatt	As a resident of Colorado and having grown up in the town of Yuma, I am deeply dismayed at the broad sweep to remove the Indian mascot from

<p>Against Self</p>	<p>this school and town's heritage. One would think we'd learn from America's past attempt to erase the Indian or force them to assimilate, as so many tribes lost precious elements of their ancestral legacy. There is such a rich history of our country along these prairie lands and the indigenous culture of Indians were an integral part of this past. From forts set up as trading posts, to pathways West, we who were raised here learned of the many who lived and settled here before us. In fact, a nearby Paleo-Indian site, was discovered by some local farmers and claimed the attention of the National Geographic Society and the Smithsonian Institute. My aunt was an archeologist that worked on this dig in the early '70's and what became known as the Jones Miller Bison Kill Site. Throughout the history of its usage in Yuma; to our entire student body and community, the term, "Indian", was synonymous with "Pride". What little kid of our generation didn't play Cowboys and Indians? Growing up on these storied plains, each was revered as mighty force that merited respect and admiration. In fact, our school had actual cowboys and Indians as classmates. All got along and were united by the reverence to all that Indians represented. Their legacy as warriors of the plains, the history of our town being named for one, the wrongs our country perpetrated on the many tribes, their bravery and abilities to live on this land, were all contributing factors to our community's pride in our Indian mascot. Ultimately, this should be a community choice, not a broad sweep of the concentrated populations of large Colorado cities, who haven't had the experience those living in Yuma have had. Please allow Yuma to decide for itself whether it wants to keep the Indian mascot.</p>
<p>Lori Barry Against Self</p>	<p>I am writing in support of keeping our Yuma Indian Mascot. I am a Yuma alumni and proud of my community. Our community supports or schools whole-heartedly. A "tribe" is a group that has a common bond, a sense of community and that is what our mascot represents. We have had four generations in the Yuma schools and are proud of our heritage. Two of my four kids are Chickasaw Indian. They were proud to be Yuma Indians. My grandson was very upset to hear we might have to change our mascot, he said he was "so excited to be a Yuma Indian" since he is an Indian. Our town was named after a Yuma Indian that lived here many years ago. He must have been a special man to have a town named after him and a mascot that honors his heritage. How sad to remove that honor from him.</p>
<p>Edward Barry Against Yuma High School</p>	<p>I am in favor of keeping the Yuma Indian mascot. We have 4 generations in family who have been Yuma Indians. My foster kids are Chickasaw Indian and have always been proud to have Indian mascot. Their little kids are really upset that they might not get to be Yuma Indians. They are proud of their heritage. We have Indian, Hispanic, Danish, German, English and more in our families heritage and are proud of each. Our town and mascot are named after a Yuma Indian for a reason and it is not a derogatory reason. It was to honor and remember someone and something. Our whole country</p>

	<p>has a history of all kinds of names from many different peoples. That is diversity.</p>
<p>Wendy Lynch Amend Self</p>	<p>Hello, I am proposing the SB21-116 bill be amended. The current bill puts all schools into one category and we all know that one size does not fit all! I currently live in Yuma but was not raised here. I've lived in Yuma for twenty years. My husband and I moved to Yuma for teaching jobs and now are raising our two sons to be strong Godly men. Part of the raising of our boys is the community. We are so blessed to live in a place where we feel loved, safe, and part of the community. The Yuma Indians represent more than just the school it represents the community. This community has gone above and beyond to support its own. With that, I propose criteria for schools to meet to keep their Indian name/mascot. Suggested criteria could include: What is the history behind the name, How/when did the school start using the name, What does the name represent to the school and community, What educational background of the name is being taught in the school, What community outreach does the school/community engage in, etc. This would allow schools to be evaluated individually on their merit and use of the Indian mascot. These criteria could be reviewed every ten to fifteen years by the House of Education Committee.</p> <p>My sons and the many others that are former and current students of Yuma School District take great pride in being Yuma Indians. In the twenty years of teaching in Yuma I can not recall any disrespect to the Indian culture. Taking away the use of our Indian mascot will be taking away our strong history of pride, respect, honor, tradition, and family. By prohibiting the use of the Indian mascot/name you will be removing the positive culture Yuma has established as Yuma Indians. Let us be the positive example that cultures can live together and promote unity, pride, and respect for one another. You simply can not solve a problem by removing or eliminating a name/mascot that has been part of history. The history behind it is formed by people's actions and opinions both positive and negative. If you want to change how the name/mascot is represented, start by human interaction and educational resources and outreach, not by punishing those who do represent it positively in the best possible way.</p>
<p>Jennie Miller Against Self</p>	<p>I am a third generation Yuma High School graduate. I lived my entire childhood years in Yuma, Colorado. I also have a lot of "Tribe Pride."</p> <p>We are a town named after a Native American that worked on the railroad and also happened to die very close to the center of our little town. Homesteaders choose to honor this man with a town name. We grew up knowing this story, and being proud that our school mascot could also honor all Native Americans. We have never and would never disgrace the name Indian! It would go against everything our little town is, what our little town has been since it's establishment.</p> <p>If Yuma loses this mascot, it will be absolutely devastating to so many future and past generations. Our story becomes just a story and no longer</p>

	<p>a way of life, no longer honoring our history. Please consider this and please let us keep our story intact.</p> <p>Thank you for your time,</p> <p>Jennie (Allen) Miller</p> <p>Yuma Indian graduate of 1997.</p>
<p>Mindy Crossland</p> <p>Against</p> <p>Self</p>	<p>I would like to speak out on behalf of my many generations of Yuma Indians! We have always taken great pride in the history of the "Yuma" Indians and their story! Just a few miles from my home along highway 34 there is a marker telling the story of The Yuma Indians! Please stop taking history away from</p> <p>Our beautiful state! No one should be offended by this but rather proud that we celebrate the Indians and wear them</p> <p>With pride! Keep our History and leave our Traditions and Indians alone!!'</p>
<p>Linda McNamee</p> <p>Against</p> <p>Self</p>	<p>Why would you make these schools spend thousands of dollars to change their mascots when the money would be much better spent on educating the children? I would be proud to be represented as a Native American mascot- the schools take so much pride in their activities and are using a wonderful mascot to represent them. This shows respect and faith in the Native Americans. Is this simply a way to make up for lost revenue from the oil and gas industry that you continue to try to stop?</p>
<p>Mark McNsmee</p> <p>Against</p> <p>Self</p>	<p>Why would you take money away from educating children to change a mascot? These mascots have been here forever and represent respect and the strength of the people. It would cost these schools hundreds of thousands of dollars to change and would take away their pride in representing the Native Americans.</p>
<p>Melissa Orme</p> <p>Against</p> <p>Self</p>	<p>In no way have I ever experienced anyone use the Indian mascot in a demeaning way. It's always been used in a respectful manner. I view the elimination of the Indian mascot as a racial act of trying to erase the Indian people, not uphold the race & their history. In an ever-changing world of technology, the Yuma Indian mascot keeps history in the present. We can't lose sight of where we came from and the lessons that it taught us. Yuma is a town of hard-working individuals that value their history. I grew up a Yuma Indian and graduated high school as one. Even though I no longer live in Yuma I have taken the values and history that I learned with me. I will always be proud to be a Yuma Indian even if the government makes Yuma change the mascot.</p>
<p>Dori Mekelburg</p> <p>Against</p> <p>Yuma Indians</p>	<p>Hello , My name is Dori Mekelburg. I have been a resident of Yuma, Colorado on and off for over 25 years but have been living in Yuma consistently for 18 years now. I was raised in Cripple Creek, Colorado. Being from a small rural community you understand the pride and deep love that your community has for their school and mascot. While in high school we</p>

	<p>were proud to be the CC-V Pioneers, knowing the rich history that our mascot came from and stood for. When enrolling my oldest child into the Yuma Indian school district it was very obvious the pride that this community took in the name they stood for, "Yuma Indians". After having my children and numerous nieces attend and graduate and still having a young child and many nieces and nephews still attending Yuma schools, I have come to understand the bond that brings this community together. I have never seen a community have such strong pride in who they are. The definition of "Tribe" is: a social division in a traditional society consisting of families or communities linked by social, economic, religious, or blood ties, with a common culture and dialect. This definition defines the Yuma Indians to a tee. We are a strong family that have a common link and have built a culture of pride and love among all. It doesn't matter whether you are an athlete, a member of the FBLA, FFA , FCCLA or a member of the student body, this community is PROUD to be Indians. And I have never seen a community and school take such pride in such.</p> <p>Thank you for taking your time to read my testimony, and hope that you see that we as Yuma Indians never intend to dishonor the Native Americans but take pride and feel that it is an honor to have Tribe Pride.</p> <p>Respectively Submitted</p> <p>Dori Mekelburg</p>
<p>Michael Dischner Against Self</p>	<p>My name is Michael Dischner and I am a Yuma High School alumni from the graduating class of 2007. I am about to enter my 10th year as an employee with the Yuma School District since returning back home to join my Tribe of Yuma in March of 2012. I current am employed as the district's athletic director and assistant principal and we just celebrated the 100th commencement graduation ceremony of Yuma High School.</p> <p>Our "Tribe" and mascot of the "Indians" has done nothing but instill pride, tradition, and respect into and across our community. We truly are a "Tribe". As I was pursuing my Masters degree in education administration, I asked my social media network, (a large majority of them with Yuma, Colorado and Yuma High School roots) to define, "Tribe". Through community feedback and through experiencing being a Yuma Indian for 23 years as a student and employee, my wife and I came up with the following definition to distribute as graduation gifts to the newest YHS alumni:</p> <p>"Tribe"</p> <p>A group of friends that would do anything for each other, at any time. Friends that have been together for a decade or a day, but are loyal, loving, honest, and fun-loving. The Tribe consists of people that you expect to grow old together with, and by sharing your amazing experiences, create a family. Once an Indian, always an Indian! #RollTribe</p>

	<p>I will never understand or try to manipulate how people should feel about how their race is portrayed or represented. I do however feel that the writers of this bill and those making decisions for our state solicit and manipulate the information being presented. The Yuma Tribe has gone to work to hopefully save their mascot and you will hear from many Native American people from our community that your blanket bill to ban them entirely is not supported by all American Indians the way that you have presented it. Our local Native Americans have worked alongside the school to promote and celebrate their heritage instead of attack and erase it.</p> <p>Please vote in opposition of this bill. You will be stripping away a mascot that is intended to pay tribute and respect to Native Americans and erase this recognition when they already do not get enough. Stop seeking out individuals that fit your agenda only and seek out a true representation from the entire population. I know our "Tribe" will be absolutely devastated if this bill is passed.</p>
<p>Doug Nelson For Self</p>	<p>I am the Earth and Social Justice Pastor at the Refuge in Broomfield, Colorado. I am an Indigenous person. Both in my role as a Pastor and as an indigenous individual I have heard stories and felt the pain caused by the trauma these mascots engender in our Native and Indigenous communities in Colorado. I was just talking to an educator in one of Colorado's larger school districts who related how a physical fight took place, when he was a student, between Native youth and mascot defending students. This still is a reality of persecution and traumatization that exists in Colorado.</p> <p>Please, do your part to end this abusive symbolism and pass SB21-116.</p>
<p>Tiegen Steele Against Self</p>	<p>My name is Tiegen Steele from Stratton Colorado, originally from Joes (Liberty Jr. Sr. High School).</p> <p>I oppose SB 21-116</p> <p>I am 1/4 Najavo, my father was 1/2 and my grandfather was full.</p> <p>I have always known and been proud of my Native American heritage. Although I haven't been immersed in the culture I hold it dear to my heart.</p> <p>I never gave much thought to any Indian mascot being racist when it portrayed with pride and dignity. I have never seen any high school team in this area portray my heritage poorly. I would like to see more if the history displayed but beyond that I have no complaints</p> <p>I did not attend Yuma, but for a brief time in my elementary years we were part of their school district.</p> <p>Please do not pass this bill, for one it will bury small schools trying to change and replace their history. For another reason you will bury Indian and Native American History. These schools keep the spirit alive. Help them</p>

	do this by using tax funds to set up historical events and centers to showcase the heritage, don't destroy every memory of it.
Deidre Huwa Against Self	<p>Living in Yuma and being a Yuma Indian is something I take great pride in. Growing up in and graduating from a neighboring town, I witnessed the traditions that centered around being a Yuma Indian for years. After returning to this area as an adult, with children of my own, I cannot wait for them to be a part of the "Respect, Pride, and Tradition" being a Yuma Indian represents and to make memories of their own.</p> <p>What is most frustrating about this legislation is that it does not look at each school/community individually. People who are not from our community should not be able to decide what is best for it, especially when the indigenous people who live here or have attended high school here want to keep our mascot. They NEED to be listened to! Their voices MUST be heard! Why do their opinions/points of view mean less than someone who is not from Yuma? "Forcing" the hand of school districts by a piece of legislation is government overreach plain and simple. Please listen to the people with first hand experience and knowledge regarding our community. Please vote "No" on SB21-116. Thank you.</p>
Marrton Dormish For Self	<p>Good morning! I am writing at the request of my friend Tami Johnson, who is a native of Lamar and a fellow member of The Refuge, a Christian community and mission center in Broomfield, Colo. As a Christian minister and a fourth-generation Coloradan, I believe revisiting and re-envisioning the names of particular landmarks and school mascots is an important step in coming to grips with and acknowledging our full history as a state.</p> <p>This painful but essential process makes the continued official use of "Indian" school mascots and their corresponding images, in particular Lamar's "Savages," both unacceptable and untenable — unacceptable for their derogatory reference toward a group of people made in the image of God, and untenable because of their forcible imposition, by schools that have chosen and kept those designations, on media and fellow schools and districts with which they compete.</p> <p>Please consider the following quotation during your deliberations for its reminder of our human tendency to project onto "Others" the names and traits that we hate, ignore and deny in ourselves:</p> <p>"When the Indians found there was no hope for them they went for the Creek and got under the banks and some...got their bows and a few rifles and defended themselves as well as they could. The massacre lasted six or eight hours, and a good many Indians escaped. I tell you that it was hard to see little children on their knees have their brains beat out by men professing to be civilized...Some [Indians] tried to escape on the Prairie, but most of them or run down by horsemen. I saw two Indians hold one of another's [sic] hands, chased until they were exhausted, when they kneeled down, and clasped each other around the neck and both were shot</p>

	<p>together. They were all scalped, and as high as half a dozen taken from one head. They were all horribly mutilated. You would think it impossible for white men to butcher and mutilate human beings as they did.” (from Capt. Silas Soule’s Dec. 14, 1864, letter to his friend Major Edward “Ned” Wynkoop)</p> <p>Soule’s letter describes in detail the massacre committed along Sand Creek by men of the 3rd and 1st Colorado Cavalry of more than 230 Cheyenne and Arapaho people, mostly elders, women and children. Ironically, the massacre took place on Nov. 29, 1864, about 40 miles from present-day Lamar, Colo.</p> <p>I urge your committee to unanimously pass and support this important bill, SB21-116, in its entirety. Thank you.</p>
<p>Jennifer Wolf</p> <p>For Self</p>	<p>Dear Representatives,</p> <p>As stated in the Friedman Report*, "the ongoing use of a dictionary-defined racial slur above the repeated objections of the Native American community poses serious risk for negative mental health consequences to Native Americans."</p> <p>As the mother of two student athletes in Denver Public Schools, my heart breaks to think of the other Native American students across the state that endure the normalization of derogatory slurs against our people within our learning institutions. Furthermore, the Non-Native students are part of another generation learning that these dehumanizing attitudes are okay.</p> <p>It is time to correct this wrong. Do not stand on the wrong side of history.</p> <p>Respectfully,</p> <p>Jennifer Wolf</p> <p>Ojibwe, Santee, Ponca</p> <p>She/Her/Hers</p> <p>Sloans Lake Neighborhood</p> <p>*https://www.changethemascot.org/wpcontent/uploads/2013/10/DrFriedmanReport.pdf</p>
<p>Duane Brown</p> <p>Against Self</p>	<p>This is a bad bill. Kill it.</p>
<p>Jamie Hernandez</p>	<p>To whom it may concern:</p>

<p>Against Self</p>	<p>There are so many problems with this bill. My kids attend a school that could be affected by this bill. We are proud Lamar Savages and always will be. I can't honestly figure out how being proud and honoring something can be so wrong. As we are now we see the Savages as brave, noble, strong and honorable people who stood up and defended their way of life against injustice. They wouldn't give up or walk away when pushed. We need more people in this state that have that mentality.</p> <p>If we take offense to this where does this end? Are the Vikings, Trojans, Beatdiggers or Farmers next. Honoring people and what they stood for isn't something to be ashamed of it should be something we are proud of. I took Native American studies and grew up going to the Sand Creejk Massacre. Which made me think the Savage mascot was an amazing mascot. One that stood for all the injustice they received and pride they had.</p> <p>The other major part that is a huge concern is the financial impact your putting on these schools. Rebranding is expensive for companies that have money available. How are schools supposed to afford new uniforms for 10+ sports, up to 75 kids a sport and several different uniforms for each sport. Then add in letterhead, new bus painting and that's the just part of it. With the Pandemic funds have been even tighter and now you want to take more money away from students and education. Local communities can not financially afford to absorb these costs. We are all struggling.</p> <p>If you ever came to Lamar you would see all the amazing Native American art work that lines the halls from ever class since the school opened. The metal work lining the road leading to the high school that students have made every year.</p> <p>Please reconsider and see that being proud and honoring something isn't being "racist". It is continuing the education and pride for people of different cultures.</p> <p>If you take our mascot I hope you realize we will always be Savages and show our Savage Pride and be a Savage Nation.</p> <p>Thank you, Jamie Hernandez.</p>
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Written Testimony

In Support: SB21-116 - Prohibiting American Indian Mascots

Before The House Education Committee

April 30, 2021

Members of the Committee,

LamarProud would like to submit the following testimony on behalf of our membership, made up of American Indians, teachers, students, community leaders and others, who are committed to ending the use of American Indian mascots in our great state. Thank you for allowing us this opportunity to submit our testimony in **support of SB21-116**.

As you deliberate on this vital legislation, I would like to introduce the voices of LamarProud. Following last summer's social justice awakening, we reflected on areas in which we could enact positive change within our own local communities. Subsequently, a group of Lamar High School alumni decided to take action on the issue of racist American Indian mascots, an issue that has plagued our community and others for decades. LamarProud concluded that now is far past the time to retire discriminatory and derogatory mascots in Colorado.

Since then, we have expanded our membership to include voices within the American Indian community, business leaders, students and advocates from across Colorado. What first began as a local initiative, advocating for the retirement of the racist Lamar, CO mascot, grew into a statewide movement of like minded voices. Today, we have thousands of signatories on a petition to retire these mascots, a membership of hundreds, and core advocates who have been courageous in speaking out across Colorado as well as nationally.

In 2016, members of Governor Hickenlooper's *Commission to Study American Indian Representations in Public Schools*, many of whom were American Indian leaders, recommended eliminating American Indian names and images in Colorado's public schools. Since, academic



study, supporting the goals of SB21-116, has been dedicated to this very issue. For example, Stanford University professor and member of The Tulalip Tribes, Stephanie Fryberg, Ph.D., determined that exposure to American Indian mascots has negative consequences on American Indian students' self-image and self-esteem, which is significant given data showing that American Indian youth are more likely to experience suicidal ideation and substance abuse. Also, such mascots have negative effects on non-Native community members. Statistically supported evidence proves that intergroup relations between communities are often undermined by negative stereotyping (i.e. derogatory mascots and images).

As a collective, we recognize the essential role of American Indian communities in this effort, as well as American Indian's work in doing exactly what this legislation calls for. Without their dedication, perseverance and patience, LamarProud would not exist or be successful in our mission. We exist to elevate Native voices, while supporting their community activism, in a way that promotes empathy and inclusivity. SB21-116 does exactly that. I urge all members of this committee to recognize American Indian voices, as well as the thousands of others, who assisted in crafting this critical legislation, by voting yes on SB21-116.

Thank you for your commitment to ensuring that all Colorado students are educated in a safe and inclusive environment.

LamarProud Leadership:

Stephanie Davis

Blake Mundell

Shilo Rohlman

Jaocb Reed

May 9, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

As a young mother living in rural Colorado with Native American, as well as Mexican, ties, I strongly oppose House Education SB21-116 (Prohibit American Indian Mascots [Danielson, Benavidez, McLachlan]).

At a young age, I learned that I came from strong Native American blood lines on my father's side. My great-great grandmother was full blood Aztec Indian, while my grandfather was full blood Apache Indian. Throughout my education, I jumped at any chance to further my knowledge on my ancestors who gave so much to this land.

Growing up in a small town 28 miles from the home of the Yuma Indians, I always had a small sense of jealousy when going to Yuma for high school sporting events. Not only did the school, but the entire community, beamed with pride and support for their beloved Indians. There was not one time in my several trips to Yuma that I ever witnessed any sort of disrespect to the Indian culture.

After getting married, I found myself moving to Yuma to raise my three daughters. Like my own parents did, I have not once shied away from educating my children on their Mexican and Native American heritage. It was not until after moving to Yuma that I learned the history behind the 'Yuma Indians'. What an amazing way to honor such an incredible culture and man.

Respectfully, I wholeheartedly believe that by prohibiting the use of American Indian mascots will do more harm than you even believe. You are essentially ripping away any last remnants and erasing the identity of the culture you say you are trying to protect. How should I justify to my children removing the name of the Indians to honor them? Should not it be the other way around – say their name, make their face and presence known?

As a Native American in rural Colorado, I ask you, please, reconsider your stance on this topic to ensure our culture does not disappear.

Sincerely,

Alicia (Vasquez) Barry

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