

HOUSE BILL No. 2735

By Representative Haswood

Requested by Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority

2-7

1 AN ACT establishing a task force on missing women and girls who are
2 black, indigenous and people of color.

3
4 WHEREAS, According to a 2020 report by the women's media center,
5 there are 64,000 to 75,000 missing black women and girls across the
6 United States; and

7 WHEREAS, Cases involving black women and girls often do not
8 receive the attention they need, and there are often barriers to families
9 reporting a loved one, such as mistrust of police and racial disparities in
10 how law enforcement treat disappearances; and

11 WHEREAS, The tens of thousands of black women and girls who are
12 missing include abductees, sex trafficking victims and runaways. Black
13 women and girls exist at the intersection of racism and sexism, and they
14 often face worse health, wealth, housing, education and employment
15 outcomes; and

16 WHEREAS, Black girls comprise over 40% of domestic sex trafficking
17 victims in the United States; and

18 WHEREAS, Law enforcement often categorize missing black girls as
19 runaways and fail to treat their cases with urgency; and

20 WHEREAS, According to a 2020 report by the sovereign bodies
21 institute, a nonprofit, indigenous-led research organization, at least 2,306
22 missing native American women and girls have gone missing in the last 40
23 years in the United States, about 1,800 of whom were killed or vanished;
24 and

25 WHEREAS, Systemic vulnerability and compounding suppressions
26 have resulted in mass amounts of disappeared indigenous peoples, with the
27 national congress of American Indians finding that an estimated 40% of
28 women who are victims of sex trafficking identify as American Indian,
29 Alaska native or First Nations; and

30 WHEREAS, Families of native American women and girls who have
31 gone missing report a lack of cultural awareness, systemic racism and
32 sexism and widespread apathy by law enforcement and express frustration
33 over the fact that their cases are not pursued; and

34 WHEREAS, There is no comprehensive state or federal data
35 concerning missing and murdered native Americans. Advocates argue that

1 poor record keeping, racial misclassification and adverse relationships
2 between tribal governments and outside law enforcement have led to an
3 underreporting of cases.

4 Now, therefore:

5 *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Kansas:*

6 Section 1. (a) There is hereby established a task force on missing
7 women and girls who are black, indigenous and people of color. The task
8 force shall be composed of the following members:

9 (1) One member appointed by the speaker of the house of
10 representatives;

11 (2) one member appointed by the minority leader of the house of
12 representatives;

13 (3) one member appointed by the president of the senate;

14 (4) one member appointed by the minority leader of the senate;

15 (5) one member appointed by the Kansas association of chiefs of
16 police;

17 (6) one member appointed by the Kansas sheriffs' association;

18 (7) two members, appointed by the governor, from among the
19 following:

20 (A) A county or district attorney, or a designee thereof;

21 (B) the United States attorney for the district of Kansas, or a designee
22 thereof;

23 (C) a judge or attorney licensed to practice law in Kansas with
24 extensive experience with the Kansas juvenile justice system;

25 (D) a district coroner, or a designee thereof; or

26 (E) the department of health and environment;

27 (8) two members, appointed by the executive director of the office of
28 native American affairs, who are members of the Prairie Band Potawatomi
29 Nation in Kansas, the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska, the Kickapoo
30 Tribe in Kansas or the Sac and Fox Nation of Missouri in Kansas and
31 Nebraska;

32 (9) two members, appointed by the governor, who represent victims,
33 with a focus on individuals who work with victims of violence or their
34 families; and

35 (10) four or more members, appointed by the governor, from among
36 the following:

37 (A) A statewide or local organization that provides legal services to
38 women and girls;

39 (B) a statewide or local organization that provides advocacy or
40 counseling for women and girls who have been victims of violence;

41 (C) a statewide or local organization that provides healthcare services
42 to women and girls;

43 (D) a statewide or local organization that represents women and girls

1 who have been sexually assaulted;

2 (E) a women's health organization or agency; or

3 (F) a survivor of gender-related violence.

4 (b) Members shall be appointed to the task force on or before July 1,
5 2024. The governor shall designate one member appointed by the governor
6 to call the first meeting of the task force.

7 (c) Members shall serve for two-year terms. Any vacancy in the
8 membership of the task force shall be filled by appointment in the same
9 manner prescribed by this section for the original appointment.

10 (d) (1) No member of the task force shall receive compensation for
11 such member's services, except that, if approved by the legislative
12 coordinating council, members of the task force attending meetings
13 authorized by the task force shall be paid amounts for expenses, mileage
14 and subsistence as provided in K.S.A. 75-3223(e), and amendments
15 thereto.

16 (2) The members of the task force shall select a chairperson and vice
17 chairperson from the membership of the task force.

18 (3) The task force may meet at any time and at any place within the
19 state on the call of the chairperson. A quorum of the task force shall be a
20 majority of the appointed members. All actions of the task force shall be
21 by motion adopted by a majority of those members present when there is a
22 quorum.

23 (e) The task force shall study the following:

24 (1) The systemic causes behind violence that women and girls who
25 are black, indigenous and people of color experience, including patterns
26 and underlying factors that explain why disproportionately high levels of
27 violence occur against women and girls who are black, indigenous and
28 people of color, including underlying historical, generational, social,
29 economic, institutional and cultural factors that may contribute to the
30 violence;

31 (2) appropriate methods for tracking and collecting data on violence
32 against women and girls who are black, indigenous and people of color,
33 including data on missing and murdered women and girls who are black,
34 indigenous and people of color;

35 (3) policies and institutions such as policing, child welfare, coroner
36 practices and other governmental practices that impact violence against
37 women and girls who are black, indigenous and people of color and the
38 investigation and prosecution of crimes of gender violence against such
39 women and girls;

40 (4) measures necessary to address and reduce violence against
41 women and girls who are black, indigenous and people of color;

42 (5) measures to help victims, victims' families and victims'
43 communities prevent and heal from violence that occurs against women

1 and girls who are black, indigenous and people of color;

2 (6) major traffic hubs, highways and resource extraction sites that
3 lead to or are responsible for the facilitation of the abduction of women
4 and girls who are black, indigenous and people of color; and

5 (7) necessary requirements for the creation of a state-wide awareness
6 campaign.

7 (f) To help accomplish the requirements of subsection (e), the task
8 force shall seek out and enlist the cooperation and assistance of
9 nongovernmental organizations, community and advocacy organizations
10 working with women and girls who are black, indigenous and people of
11 color and academic researchers and experts, specifically those specializing
12 in violence against such women and girls, representing diverse
13 communities disproportionately affected by violence against such women
14 and girls or focusing on issues related to gender violence and violence
15 against such women and girls.

16 (g) On or before December 31, 2025, and annually thereafter, the task
17 force shall submit a report to the house standing committee on corrections
18 and juvenile justice and the senate standing committee on judiciary and
19 shall make such report publicly available. Such report shall include, but
20 not be limited to, recommendations concerning the following:

21 (1) Institutional policies and practices that are effective in reducing
22 gender violence and increasing the safety of women and girls who are
23 black, indigenous and people of color, including identifying policies to
24 ensure first responders are culturally competent;

25 (2) helping victims and communities heal from gender violence and
26 violence against women and girls who are black, indigenous and people of
27 color;

28 (3) advancing the knowledge of communities on the severity of
29 missing and murdered women and girls who are black, indigenous and
30 people of color;

31 (4) educating and training communities to understand the role and use
32 of social media in preventing, protecting and developing protocols relating
33 to missing women and girls who are black, indigenous and people of color;

34 (5) developing a strategy to collect statistics, demographics, surveys,
35 oral histories and data analysis; and

36 (6) preventive programs and ideas to advance the safety of women
37 and girls, including policies that address the overlapping forms of
38 oppression faced by women and girls who are black, indigenous and
39 people of color.

40 (h) The provisions of this section shall expire on December 31, 2027.

41 Sec. 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its
42 publication in the statute book.