

Testimony of Marley Corbine

Before the
Subcommittee on Work and Welfare and
Subcommittee on Oversight
Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives

November 29, 2023

Thank you, Chairman LaHood, Ranking Member Davis; Chairman Schweikert, Ranking Member Pascrell; and honorable members of the Subcommittees; I am honored by the invitation to share my testimony here today.

My name is Marley Corbine, I am a Lac Courte Oreilles tribal member and mother of three. My oldest daughter, Nyla, is eight years year old; my youngest daughter, Stella, is four years old; and my son, David, is three months old and sitting right behind me with my sister, Tiera Corbine. I work as Deputy Clerk of Court for the Lac Courte Oreilles Tribal Court where I have worked for almost four years. Two of my three children receive child support through the LCO Child Support office.

I earned my associates from Lac Courte Oreilles University and am now working toward my undergraduate degree at the University of Minnesota Duluth. I am studying Tribal Administration and Governance, a program that is unique to UMD. It's important for my children to see my example of working and studying for goals that I set for myself. I plan on going to law school within the next five years because I want to help people.

As important as it is for me to set a good example for my children, I believe that I am not the only one who should support them. I am here to speak especially about my eldest daughter who has wonderful interests and talents. She is a pow wow dancer and takes classes at the local dance school in the town near where we live. Her father has a child support order to assist in her care, but due to his employment schedule he is an inconsistent payer. Because of this the only child support I received for the care of our daughter was through an intercept of his annual tax refund.

Each time it came at an important time when fees for dance were due, or her dance outfits needed to be made. I have heard people say that babies are really expensive, but I disagree. Growing children with interests and activities are even more expensive! My daughter's regalia for pow wow takes time and materials; and even though I do the beading for her regalia, it takes money to buy supplies. The tax return intercept payments are important. Even though I cannot count on her dad for monthly payments, through the tax intercept program he has routinely contributed to her care.

In the past, my daughter's dad used to call and tell me that I would be getting a tax payment. He was never angry about it; he knew that I always use it for the care of our daughter. In many ways I believe he was glad that his taxes were intercepted because it wasn't money from a paycheck and wasn't something he ever saw.

Sadly, I was recently told by LCO Child Support that the program to get child support for us by tax intercept has been suspended. In the past those payments were managed by the State of North Dakota for our Tribe. I don't know the details as to why this program is being suspended, but I do know that not receiving these payments is going to make it very difficult for my daughter to participate in her dance classes next year. Each week I skip my lunch so that I will have enough time built up to take my daughter to dance class in town. This was something that he was able to help with as well with his taxes; I don't believe it is fair that it should stop.

I understand that Congress has to keep the safety of everyone's tax information in mind, but my hope is that you understand how important these payments are to families like mine, all across our reservation and America. Thank you for listening to my story and I hope that you are able to act quickly to find a solution and help our families continue to receive this vital support.