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(SD)-Official Indigenous Language Bill Sent To SD Senate Floor

By: John Axtell Posted at: 02/09/2019 11:36 PM

PIERRE, S.D. - The South Dakota Senate State Affairs Committee voted unanimously Friday to advance a bill recognizing the language of the Great Sioux Nation as the state's official indigenous language.

The language is made up of three dialects - Dakota, Lakota and Nakota - and the official language bill received passionate support during its committee hearing.

Elyssa Sierra Concha, a teacher in the Lakota immersion program at Red Cloud Indian School, said passing the bill will tell indigenous children that who they are and the language they speak are "not only recognized but celebrated."

Concha said she wants them to grow up knowing their state is fully behind them and the bill's sponsor, Senate Democratic leader Troy Heinert, calls it "one of the biggest bills" he's brought during his time in the Legislature.