

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## ESHB 2551

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Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Permitting students to wear traditional tribal regalia and objects of cultural significance at graduation ceremonies and related events.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on State Government & Tribal Relations (originally sponsored by Representatives Lekanoff, Ramel, Rude, Leavitt, Valdez, Davis, Doglio, Walen, Pollet, Macri, Ormsby and Santos).

**House Committee on State Government & Tribal Relations**  
**Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education**

### **Background:**

The traditional attire for graduation ceremonies is the cap and gown. In 1895 the American Intercollegiate Commission adopted the Intercollegiate Code of Academic Costume (Code) to standardize the style and color for robes and hoods in the United States; the Code specified black gowns in which the lining of the hood indicates the university and the border color indicates the academic discipline. While there are no statewide standards on graduation attire in Washington, students at many schools are encouraged or required to wear mortarboard caps and black gowns to graduation ceremonies. On January 28, 2020, the Superintendent of Public School Instruction issued a letter to school district leaders and staff to encourage public schools to adopt policies to permit students of American Indian or Alaska Native students to wear traditional tribal regalia and items of cultural significance at commencement and other public events.

### **Summary:**

Beginning with the 2020 graduating classes, school districts, public schools, and institutions of higher education may not prohibit students who are members of a federally recognized tribe from wearing traditional tribal regalia or objects of Native American cultural significance at graduation ceremonies or related school events. These schools may still require students to wear a gown, but caps may not be required if they are incompatible with the regalia or objects. These academic institutions must update any relevant policies or procedures accordingly.

### **Votes on Final Passage:**

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

House 95 1  
Senate 48 1

**Effective:** March 18, 2020