

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1393

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to providing public school students with opportunities for cultural expression at commencement ceremonies.

Brief Description: Providing public school students with opportunities for cultural expression at commencement ceremonies.

Sponsors: Representatives McEntire, Morgan, Stonier, Simmons, Thai, Bergquist, Taylor, Springer, Wylie, Pollet, Ormsby, Hill and Santos.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/13/25, 2/18/25 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires school districts, charter schools, and state-tribal education compact schools to permit students to wear one item or object of cultural significance at high school commencements and other official graduation ceremonies and events.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 18 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Shavers, Vice Chair; Rude, Ranking Minority Member; Keaton, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Callan, Chase, Couture, Donaghy, Eslick, Marshall, McEntire, Ortiz-Self, Pollet, Reeves, Rule, Scott and Stonier.

Staff: Damian Morden-Snipper (786-7296) and Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

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

By statute, school districts set rules for student dress codes, but districts may not prohibit students from wearing clothing associated with their religion. In addition, students who are members of federally recognized tribes may wear traditional tribal regalia or objects of Native American cultural significance along with or attached to a gown at graduation ceremonies or related school events.

Summary of Bill:

School districts, charter schools, and state-tribal education compact schools (schools) must permit students to wear one item or object of cultural significance with or attached to their gown at high school commencements and other official graduation ceremonies and events. The item or object must be befitting of the ceremony or event and adhere to applicable decorum requirements of the schools. Schools may prohibit an item that is likely to cause substantial disruption or interfere materially with a high school commencement or other official graduation ceremony or event.

Statutory provisions related to the wearing of traditional tribal regalia or objects of Native American cultural significance by students who are members of a federally recognized tribe are not modified or otherwise affected.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) It is important for students to express their cultural background, identity, and heritage, even with a small item. For Native American students, graduation is a moment of honor for their families and ancestors. Wearing tribal regalia is a statewide right, but some students are still meeting resistance to being allowed to wear their regalia. This bill includes important limits on the items students may wear, and questions about an appeals process for students who are prohibited from wearing an item can be addressed elsewhere.

(Opposed) We should honor the histories of all cultures and all students, but it is important that we establish guidelines at the local level, and communicate the guidelines and policies to students before the week of graduation.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Joel McEntire, prime sponsor; Vasyi

Tarapov, Lake Washington High School; Yuval Yedidsion, Lake Washington High School; Anna Tiberi; Sakshi Verma; Vojin Predovic; Lauren Mendez, Washington School Counselor Association; and Roz Thompson, Association of Washington School Principals.

(Opposed) John Axtell.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: Tara Lyn Fray.