

Good afternoon committee members,

I am writing today in support of HB 2052. We live in a time that where we, as a society, are starting to see the systemic injustices against all BIPOC people of this nation. For so many years the indigenous peoples of this land were denied the right to celebrate their heritage and cultural beliefs. It was not until after the civil rights movement in the 1960s that indigenous people were even given the right to vote--on land that was theirs to begin with.

Allowing indigenous youth the opportunity to wear their regalia for school events and for events that should be celebrated, should not have to be something we go through the legislative process with--yet here we are. I ask you all to consider what negative message not passing this bill will say to these youth that are working so hard to overcome stigmatization in every aspect of life. Caucasian and other ethnic background students are allowed to do things like paint their graduation caps or wear LED lights and bells for their commencement ceremony, so why should wearing a feather or beadwork be any different? There is a great difference in the sentiment that goes along with wearing things of cultural significance for indigenous youth and the other kid wearing LED lights...

Please make the right choice in passing this bill. You will be speaking life into these students, where before, they've only experienced negativity, ridicule, and being made the butt end of a joke. As native peoples, we cherish our youth--they are our future. I urge you all today to take a stand with us and to support not only this bill, but also the future.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Jessica Hernandez Sixkiller
Registered Tribal Member, Rosebud Sioux