

HB 2052 is a matter of tribal sovereignty, cultural expression and the right for all students to express their identities. For too long, schools have been spaces of forced assimilation for Native American communities. Boarding schools stripped children of their language, ripped them away from their families and cultural networks, abused them, and ultimately caused cultural genocide for tribes across the nation, including in Oregon. Through resilience, tribes are beginning to heal the traumas from that period and subsequent oppressive policies. This is a long process and history does not simply disappear. Therefore, when a Native American student is told they cannot wear their tribal regalia to important events like graduation, it is not a neutral act. It cannot be divorced from the history of forced assimilation. It sends the message that this student still--in 2021--should conform to a white dominant culture and assimilate. It undervalues the cultural identity of that individual. HB2052 is a small, but vital step in requiring schools to validate and recognize the cultural identities of their Native American students. School should be places that celebrate students' cultural identities. I strongly urge you to vote yes on HB 2052.