



CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF COOS, LOWER UMPQUA AND SIUSLAW INDIANS

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

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Senate Committee on Education
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

4/20/2021

RE: Support for HB 2052: Tribal Regalia & Objects of Cultural Significance

Dear Chair Michael Dembrow, Vice-Chair Chuck Thomsen, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Josh Davies, Tribal Councilman and Director of Education for the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians, and on behalf of our Tribal Council who fully support this bill, I am submitting testimony to support HB 2052. The Tribes fully support requiring school districts to allow students to wear Native American items of cultural significance at public school events, including high school graduation.

Our people have been proud of their knowledge and culture since time immorial. Learning the stories, the ceremonial practices, lead to true sustainability for our environment and true abundance for our people. As young people grew and acquired more knowledge, rights were achieved and gifts were given. These rights and gifts represent a strength of self, an ability to represent their people in a good way and for others to recognize those achievements instantly. Since that time, Our lands were illegally taken, and our traditions suppressed. All this time though, we remained resilient. Our ancestors endured and persevered to have our tribes restored as sovereign nations. Today, we work with Federal, State, and local partners to steward our lands. Both of which were taken from us and for the land that have been returned to us. Today, we also gift our youth and young adults with sacred cultural items. Whether that be Dentalium, Eagle Feathers, Flicker Feathers, it is a gift that they have earned to show that they represent our community in a good way. Not allowing our youth to represent the culture of the very lands the schools are built on is hypocritical and it is a remnant of the boarding school days. HB 2052 is an additional small step to allow us the freedom to live our culture, the culture of these lands and waters.

My daughter recently graduated from high school. When she brought this concept to me, I offered my support. She said, "Thank you, but this was something I have to conquer." It took her multiple visits to the administration's office to receive verbal approval for her and another Native student to wear cedar bark caps. My daughter's cedar bark cap took many, many hours to create by hands of another Tribal Member. My daughter was brave enough to go against the grain and to stand up for her heritage, ancestors and future Tribal Members. These courageous young

women made way for fellow Indigenous students to be able to wear regalia at their respective high schools. This Bill would allow others to have the same opportunity to represent their Tribes and culture proudly, with dignity and with respect.

When we were restored in 1984, our first Chief (Edgar Bowen) used to say, “The Government wanted me to go to school when all I wanted to do was fish. They told me, go to school, get a job, and then you can fish. Well, now I’m finally done with all that and there are no fish left. They’ve taken that from me too,” and then he would laugh. I used to think about this many times. As Native folks I think we choose to laugh when we should be crying. I’ve heard kids say, “I was going to wear a cedar bark cap, or my flicker feathers but they didn’t want it to interfere with ‘tradition’, and then they laughed too. By not allowing our youth to incorporate their culture into these ‘new traditions’ we are creating new generations of trauma, more nervous laughter, covering tears. On anyone’s graduation the only laughter should be genuine, not to cover their trauma.

Allow us to heal where and when we can. HB 2052 begins this healing. While the path may be long, it will become easier with each step forward. I would like to leave you today with a quote from Chief Seattle, “Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect.”

I, CTCLUSI Tribal Councilman Josh Davies urge the Committee to support HB 2052.

Thank you for your consideration,



Josh Davies
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