

House Education

02/29/2024 01:30 PM

HB24-1323 School Graduation Attire

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Victoria Ware For themselves	<p>Thank you Madam Chair and members of the committee. My name is Victoria Ware, and I am representing myself in support of HB24-1323, School Graduation Attire.</p> <p>I am a black female at East high school. I am one of the presidents of a club at our school, Ladies First. We are a black girl unity group who aim to make comfortable spaces for black girls who may feel alone attending a PWI. This bill is important because being a part of Ladies First is one of my major identities while attending East High school. This club has helped push me to stay on top of my school work and make sure I am accountable for my actions. It is a good reminder that I have people behind me who are willing to help me succeed in my high school career. So walking across the stage with my African American Sash and black girl empowerment sash is important because it shows my journey throughout high school.</p> <p>Please vote yes on HB24-1323 School Graduation Attire and thank you for your time.</p>



Written Testomony



Good Morning everyone, My name Is Jaianna Moore and I am speaking on behalf of all my peers who are unable to rightfully wear their cultural attire during one of the most important events of our young lives. This is important to me and many other students and peers for the reason that their cultural attire represents generations of history and signifies the hardship that families, grandparents and great grandparents have had to experience and overcome through the jim crow south through the 1954 Brown v Board of Education ruling for integration and busing. Cultural Regalia is something to show how far we have come as a people and a display of where we are going. One day I hope to see all of us be able to wear our cultural attire freely and happily while walking across that stage.

Thank you madam chair and members of the committee. My name is Shan Lagard and I am the Black Civic Engagement and Policy Coordinator for Soul 2 Soul Sisters. I'm testifying on behalf of S2SS in support of HB24-1323.

Soul 2 Soul Sisters is a racial justice organization that is focused on eradicating anti-Black racism. We center the health, healing and joy of Black Women, Femmes, Trans people and their families.

Graduating from school is a major achievement in a person's life whether it be from graduate school, college, high school, middle school or even kindergarten. It is a time to celebrate all the hard work that has been put in to get to this stage. This accomplishment is memorialized in a formal ceremony and remembered by receiving your diploma that says "you did it!" This momentous occasion can be the best day of someone's life and they may want to acknowledge their identities that helped them get to this day by wearing something from their culture. Soul 2 Soul Sisters believes that self-expression is an integral part of liberation. This belief is especially important to the Black community because there are many disparities in graduation rates between Black students and white students especially for first generation or Black/African immigrants. For example in 2023, only 80 percent of Black students completed high school in comparison to the 90 percent of white students that completed high school. We also know that only 25 percent of Black people have completed some form of post secondary education. Despite all of these disparities, Black people are still making strides in obtaining education and want to celebrate this achievement by expressing themselves. Yet in Colorado, students of all education levels are told by their school administrations that they cannot wear regalia that would adequately represent their culture. Many schools cite uniformity as the reasoning for not allowing students to wear cultural regalia. However, allowing students to wear cultural regalia would allow them to show up to an exciting time as their full selves.

Today, there is an opportunity to make sure that students in Colorado are able to express their full selves and take pride in who they are. HB 1070 will ensure that every student can wear regalia that is representative of them. There is no harm in allowing students to express themselves on such an important day. Audre Lorde once said, "If I didn't define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people's fantasies for me and eaten alive." Please vote yes on HB 1070, so that students can define themselves for themselves and express that definition as they see fit at the graduation ceremonies. Thank you.

Junior Ortega

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29th February 2024

Testimony in Support of House Bill 1323 - School Graduation Attire

Dear, Madam Chair and members of the committee,
I am writing to express my wholehearted support for House Bill HB24-1323, School Graduation Attire. As a longtime community organizer for Latino students in Roaring Fork Valley, I am committed to the principles of diversity, inclusion, and the protection of individual rights. This bill will support students in expressing and celebrating their cultural and religious heritage at their own graduation.

This legislation addresses a crucial aspect of cultural expression and personal identity. It recognizes the importance of allowing individuals, particularly students, to incorporate items of cultural significance into their graduation without fear of restriction or censorship. This is not merely a matter of clothing; it is about affirming the right of every person to celebrate and express their heritage openly and proudly. Being an immigrant and the first in my family to graduate high school, I can understand the importance of wanting to honor one's heritage during such an important milestone, like graduating high school.

One of the key reasons I support this bill is its alignment with the fundamental principles of the First Amendment. By allowing individuals to wear their cultural adornments that reflect their cultural and religious identity, we are upholding the constitutional rights of free speech and the free exercise of religion. This bill sends a powerful message that our society values and respects the diverse backgrounds that contribute to its richness.

Furthermore, HB24-1323 promotes inclusivity and understanding. Cultural diversity is a cornerstone of our nation, and this bill encourages an environment where individuals from different backgrounds can share and celebrate their traditions. Allowing cultural items in graduations provides an opportunity for students to learn about and appreciate the traditions of their peers.

is a necessary and commendable step towards creating a more inclusive, respectful, and culturally rich environment. I urge the committee to support this bill and contribute to the advancement of student's autonomy and expression of their religious and cultural heritage.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Junior A. Ortega Mora

Junior Ortega

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Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Junior A. Ortega Mora

Dear Representative McLachlan and members of the House Education committee,

My name is Rev. Dr. Hunter-Crump. I am an ordained minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and am here with the Interfaith Alliance of Colorado. Thank you for allowing me to share some words of support for HB24-1323 School Graduation Attire.

I recognize that I write today as a representative of a religion that is not marginalized, that enjoys many privileges that should be available to all, especially when it comes to social acceptance of its religious symbols. It is important to recognize the impact that broad inclusivity and respect for strengths that are different from our own are on a society. We learn and grow more when surrounded by a diversity of experiences, ideas, and cultures, and recognizing this strengthens and enriches our own individual rights and experiences. This legislation addresses a crucial aspect of religious expression and personal identity.

It recognizes the importance of allowing individuals, particularly students, to incorporate items of cultural and religious significance into their graduation without fear of restriction or censorship. This is not just a matter of clothing; it is about affirming the right of every person to celebrate and express their heritage and spirituality openly and proudly at such a pivotal moment of accomplishment.

Psalm 137 reminds us how hard it was for the Israelites to sing their songs to God, to honor their cultural and religious traditions, when living as a minority far from Jerusalem. And early Christians, also a minority, were forced to hide their own cultural and religious traditions for fear of persecution by the Roman Empire.

One of the many rights that we enjoy in this country is freedom of religion. It allows all of us to pursue a life in accordance with our own faith, culture and beliefs. What better way to send our young people into the world than to let them know that we see them and that we celebrate them for all that they are? With that in mind, I ask that you please vote yes on HB24-1323. Thank you so much for your time.

In hope,

Charisa L. Hunter-Crump

Rev. Dr. Charisa Hunter-Crump



INTERFAITH ALLIANCE OF COLORADO

PROTECTING FAITH AND FREEDOM

Subject: Testimony in Support of House Bill 1323 - School Graduation Attire

February 29, 2024

Dear Rep McLachlan and members of the House Education Committee,

I am reaching out today to express the Interfaith Alliance of Colorado's support for HB24-1323, "Allowing Items at School Graduation."

The Interfaith Alliance of Colorado promotes justice, religious liberty, and interfaith understanding through building relationships in order to educate, advocate, and catalyze social change. We have over 400 faith families in our statewide network, representing more than two dozen faith traditions.

Graduation often signifies the culmination of a hardfought journey. All those who approach this milestone do so having brought with them a multitude of experiences and lessons learned influenced by their religious, cultural, and social backgrounds. Supporting students expressing and celebrating their own religious and cultural heritage at their graduation not only embodies the values of diversity, inclusion, and freedom of speech. It also allows students to reflect on and acknowledge all of the facets of their existence that have brought them to that moment of commencement.

These acknowledgements are not merely a matter of clothing; they are about affirming the right of every person to celebrate and express their heritage openly and proudly. Majority culture groups already have the chance to express their identities at graduation ceremonies, so protecting the ability of others to bring their full selves to graduation as well is a matter of fairness. It promotes equity and inclusion, as well as creates an environment that allows deeper celebration for all.

Freedom of religion is a hallmark of our democracy and important to an individual's sense of identity. This bill would allow students to express how their faith and cultural traditions have contributed to their moment of achievement. It also sends a powerful

message that our community values and respects the diversity and richness of life across Colorado, and is a necessary step to ensure that richness is respected and protected by the next generation.

We respectfully urge the committee to support HB24-1323, securing student's autonomy through religious and cultural expression.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shara Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Shara" and the last name "Smith" clearly distinguishable.

Shara Smith, CEO
Interfaith Alliance of Colorado

My name is Aaron Hackett, I am the Western Lead Organizer at New Era Colorado, a nonpartisan, nonprofit that is a leader in engaging young people at universities and communities alike in the political process. I'm here to urge a yes vote on HB24-1323.

As someone who is deeply engaged in our community here in Durango, I've witnessed firsthand the diversity and cultural heritage that defines the Fort Lewis College student body. It is part of New Era Colorado's mission to champion anti-racists policies that impact young people in Colorado, including HB24-1323. This bill would prohibit public institutions from restricting what students can wear and display as religious or cultural adornments at a graduation ceremony.

Today, Indigenous and Alaskan Native students make up about 45% of the student population at Fort Lewis College with 185 tribes and villages represented, [according to the college's website](#). Given our nation's painful history of racism, genocide, and mass displacement, it's important to note that Fort Lewis College [was operated as an "indian boarding school" from 1891 to 1910](#). Refusing to allow all students to wear adornments that represent their cultures would continue our history in racism.

Although we recognize Colorado has passed the Native American Regalia bill last year, there are students still being denied the ability to express their cultural heritage. HB24-1323 would change that. New Era Colorado believes that all students should be able to express their cultural heritage, country of origin, sexual orientation, and religious traditions during graduation ceremonies.

HB24-1323 would guarantee that students from a significant range of backgrounds are able to proudly represent their cultures. HB24-1323 is the next logical step that will foster an environment of acceptance and appreciation for all cultures.

I strongly encourage you to support this meaningful legislation.

Thank you for your attention on this vital issue.