

[Date]

[School Principal and/or School District Superintendent]
[School District Address]

Re: [Student's name]'s right under California Education Code Section 35183.1 to wear traditional tribal regalia or recognized objects of religious or cultural significance at [Name of School]'s graduation ceremony

Dear Superintendent/Principal [Name],

My student, [Name], would like to wear [traditional tribal regalia or a recognized object of religious or cultural significance] at their graduation ceremony at [Name of school]. [Add sentence here regarding your child's tribal membership or affiliation, including, if appropriate, the ways your student engages with traditional or cultural events or activities and the importance of these to your child's life. For example, "[Name of student] attends [Name of tribe] Tribe's cultural events, has learned to gather traditional plants for ceremony, and is learning [name of tribe's language.]" Wearing a [traditional tribal regalia or object of religious or cultural significance] during [Name of student]'s school graduation—an event of exceptional importance in [Name of student]'s life—carries cultural and spiritual significance for [him/her/them] as a [member or citizen] of [Name of tribe]. [Add a sentence here, if appropriate describing what that cultural or religious significance is. For example, "In the [Name of tribe], the gift of an eagle feather to wear at a ceremony is a great honor given in a recognition of an important transition and must be worn, rather than held or borne, to fully recognize the [Name of tribe] Tribe's cultural and religious traditions."]

On [date], we notified [Name of school] Principal [Name of principal] that [Name of student] intended to wear [traditional tribal regalia or a recognized object of religious or cultural significance] on their graduation [cap/gown/item of clothing] during the graduation ceremony. Principal [Name of principal] informed us that [Name of student] is not allowed to do so. [Add more detail as appropriate about your interaction(s) with the principal or other school staff, including whether this communication took place by phone, email, or in-person conversation and whether you followed up on this communication] [Name of student] has a right under California Education Code Section 35183.1 to wear [traditional tribal regalia or recognized object of religious or cultural significance] on their graduation [cap/gown/item of clothing]. This section of the California Education Code states:

- (a) A pupil may wear traditional tribal regalia or recognized objects of religious or cultural significance as an adornment at school graduation ceremonies. Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit a local educational agency's discretion and authority to prohibit an item that is likely to cause a substantial disruption of, or material interference with, the ceremony.
- (b) For purposes of this section, the following terms have the following meanings:
 - (1) "Adornment" means something attached to, or worn with, but not replacing, the cap and gown customarily worn at school graduation ceremonies.
 - (2) "Cultural" means recognized practices and traditions of a certain group of people.
 - (3) "Local educational agency" means a school district, county office of education, or charter school¹

¹ CAL. EDUC. CODE §35183.1 (1998) (effective Jan. 1, 2019)

Commented [LN1]: NOTE:

You can direct this either to your student's school principal, if you think the principal will reconsider their decision; or to the District Superintendent, who is a level above the school principal. You should direct it to whomever you think is most strategic (or to both the principal and the Superintendent).

Refusing to allow [Name of student] to wear [traditional tribal regalia or recognized object of religious or cultural significance] at their graduation ceremony at [Name of school] violates their rights under California Education Code Section 35183.1. Please contact me as soon as possible at [parent/guardian cell phone / email address] to confirm that [Name of student] will be allowed to wear [object] at [his/her/their] graduation ceremony.

Very truly yours,

[Signature of parent/guardian]

[Parent/guardian name]

Cc: [Name of principal or superintendent]

[Name of school or district]