

To: Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee, Senator Bud Estes, Chairman

**From: Carole Cadue-Blackwood, an enrolled member of the Kickapoo Tribe in Kansas
and a Lawrence, Kansas Resident**

Date: March 2, 2018

Re: HB 2498- Native American Regalia

Good morning Chairman Estes and Members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to present written testimony in support of HB-2498. My name is Carole Cadue-Blackwood and I'm also a longtime resident of Lawrence, Kansas where my two youngest daughters attend Lawrence public schools. We are enrolled members of the Kickapoo Tribe in Kansas.

I'm here today because I am greatly concerned about the "quiet crisis" faced by our Native American students. Native Americans have the highest high school drop out rate among all ethnicities. Graduation is a significant event in any community, but more so in Native culture. That is why it is critical that the state of Kansas needs to support the academic achievements of Native students.

As parents we love and have concern for all our youth and our future. Our youth is our tomorrow. In published reports and most notably in the *Gannon v. Kansas Supreme Court* decision, students of color in our schools are at the lowest in achievement scores in all categories. The decision goes on to cite the disparity of unmet education needs in our racial groups, i.e., African American, Hispanic, and Native American students. The high school dropout rates mirror the findings of the recent Kansas Supreme Court decision.

In the recent *Gannon v. Kansas* decision, the Rose Standards were cited and pointed out the unconstitutional and disparate unmet education needs of students of color; African American, Hispanic, and Native American students. I specifically cite the number five (5) capacity of the Rose standards: *(v) efficient grounding in the arts to enable each student to appreciate his or her cultural and historical heritage.*

As parents we love and care for our children and strive to provide for the successful futures as any other loving and caring parent. We strive to support our children to the greatest extent of our available resources. The very act of bestowing an eagle feather or decorating a child's mortar board is not just for decoration. It's a tremendous symbol of cultural preservation that Native identity has survived and will continue.

HB-2498 will allow Native American students to wear traditional regalia and objects of cultural significance. This includes feathers and beadwork at graduation ceremonies. Graduation ceremonies are a huge milestone for anyone, but more so for Native students. The very act of wearing regalia allows Native students to showcase and take pride in Native American culture and serve as role models for younger generations.

I cannot speak on behalf of all 573 federally recognized tribes. However, in my tribe, for time immemorial, eagle feathers are given in times of great honor. A graduate brings honor to his or her family, community, their tribal nation, and serves as a role model for all students of color. Education is an act of self-determination for any student. It is vital that the State of Kansas recognize that there is a “quiet crisis” within the Native population. A crisis must be averted with determination and action resource-driven goals to overcome the unmet needs of the students of color in our Kansas school system.

In conclusion, I thank you on behalf of my unborn grandchildren and their children. We humbly ask for you to support HB-2498.

Miigwetch. Thank you.

Carole Cadue-Blackwood