

Hello Mr. Chairman Barker and Members of the Committee :

My name is Sophia Suke. I am here today on behalf of other Native American students who want to show who they are when receiving their amazing achievements such as graduating from their schooling and striving for the better of themselves and out native people showing we are smarter than you think.

Native American students have some of the lowest graduation rates in the nation. We should be able to honor our culture and tradition with wearing our beaded caps and eagle feathers on our graduation day. It should be a time to celebrate and proudly demonstrate part of who we are because we made it and helped to beat that low graduation rate statistic.

Our regalia is part of who we are. Everything we wear means something, like our eagle feathers, they're given to us for we've made great achievements, such as graduating, and the eagle feathers are an honor and is a sign of respect. The moccasins we wear are a way our grandmother earth recognizes us. The dresses we women wear was an everyday outfit of many different varieties. The long hair our men and women have is a way of better connecting ourselves with our grandmother earth, so the longer we grow our hair the more connected we feel.

While making our regalia it takes time and patience in able to stay on one task at a time. When making our dresses, moccasins, and even braiding someone's hair, you put love and

good positive thoughts into it. So, you and everybody else knows that you put pride into everything you make.

America is acknowledged as a country of equality.

The Natives see regalia as something to wear with honor. The same way people wear their cap and gown at graduation. The same way all of your politicians wear their suit & tie to be dressed respectively appropriate. The same way you politicians and legislators are represented and recognized by the donkey or elephant symbols.

Us young Native's want to wear our regalia to be recognized and honored as the people we are.

If we can't wear regalia, why should someone be able to wear Nike shoes, KC Chiefs T-shirt, earring, and high heels, The regalia is not a costume.

The federal government made a law known as the American Indian Religious Freedom Act. So, by this act we should be able to wear our regalia for the act states basic civil liberties, and to protect and preserve for American Indians their inherent right of freedom to believe, express and exercise the traditional religious rights and cultural practices.