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SECRETARY OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM
GOVERNOR

March 19, 2025

MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents and Charter School Leaders

FROM: Mariana D. Padilla, Secretary of Public Education

RE: Guidance on Senate Bill 163, Tribal Regalia at School Events

Initial
MDP

The New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) is writing to inform you about the recent passage of Senate Bill (SB) 163, Tribal Regalia at School Events, by the 57th Legislature of the State of New Mexico. Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham signed SB163 into law, which takes effect immediately.

SB 163 introduces important provisions related to public school policies and student rights, addressing cultural and religious expression at graduation ceremonies and other school events. The full bill text can be read on the New Mexico Legislature's website at [SB 163 Legislation - New Mexico Legislature](http://www.nmlegis.gov/sb163).

The PED urges all superintendents and charter school leaders to take a proactive approach in the implementation of SB 163. Local education agencies should be prepared to:

- Update district or charter school policies to align with SB 163, particularly regarding graduation attire, as it relates to discipline and racial sensitivity.
- Inform school administrators, faculty, and staff of the new requirements to ensure compliance.
- Communicate these changes to students and families to raise awareness of their rights under the new law.
- Update school handbooks and procedural guides to reflect the revised policies before upcoming school events, including graduations.

Key Provisions of SB 163

Allowance of Tribal Regalia at Public School Events

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- Public school students who are enrolled in or eligible for enrollment in federally recognized Indian nations, tribes, and pueblos are expressly permitted to wear tribal regalia at graduation ceremonies and public school events. Schools may not prohibit the wearing of tribally significant footwear or other culturally significant items under a graduation gown.
- Tribal regalia includes traditional dress or recognized objects of religious or cultural significance, such as tribal symbols, jewelry, beading, and feathers.

Reminders related to School Discipline Policies

- No student may be subjected to discipline, discrimination, or disparate treatment based on race, religion, or culture.
- Protective hairstyles and cultural or religious headdresses are explicitly protected, including braids, locs, twists, hijabs, head wraps, and other similar expressions.
- Each school district must ensure that its discipline policies prohibit racialized aggression and provide a mechanism to report such incidents through a statewide hotline.

Application to Charter Schools

- SB 163 extends these protections to charter schools, which must also comply with non-discrimination policies and allow students to wear tribal regalia at graduation and public school events.

We appreciate your attention to this important matter and your commitment to fostering an inclusive and respectful educational environment for all students. Should you have any questions or require additional guidance, please do not hesitate to contact KatieAnn Juanico, Assistant Secretary for Indian Education at 505-709-7246 or katieann.juanico@ped.nm.gov.

MDP

cc: Josett Monette, Secretary for Indian Affairs Department
James Mountain, Senior Policy Advisor for Tribal Affairs
KatieAnn Juanico, Assistant Secretary for Indian Education