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**AB-1350 Retroactive grant of high school diplomas: COVID-19 crisis.** (2019-2020)

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**Assembly Bill No. 1350**

**CHAPTER 66**

An act to amend Section 51430 of the Education Code, relating to high school diplomas.

[ Approved by Governor September 11, 2020. Filed with Secretary of State September 11, 2020. ]

**LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST**

AB 1350, Gonzalez. Retroactive grant of high school diplomas: COVID-19 crisis.

Existing law authorizes a high school district, unified school district, county office of education, or the governing body of a charter school to retroactively grant a high school diploma to persons under specified conditions, including, among others, a person who was interned by order of the federal government during World War II.

This bill would additionally authorize a high school district, unified school district, county office of education, or the governing body of a charter school to retroactively grant a high school diploma to a person who was in their senior year of high school during the 2019–20 school year; in good academic standing and on track to graduate at the end of the 2019–20 school year, as of March 1, 2020; and unable to complete the statewide graduation requirements as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: no Local Program: no

**THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:**

**SECTION 1.** The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) On March 4, 2020, a state of emergency was declared by the Governor in response to the outbreak of a novel coronavirus, known as COVID-19. On March 19, 2020, the Governor issued a stay-at-home order to contain the spread of COVID-19, which resulted in unprecedented school closures across the state.

(b) As a result of the stay-at-home order, many school districts have transitioned to distance learning models that are often reliant on online methods that require the use of electronic devices and internet access.

(c) According to the Public Policy Institute of California, 16 percent of schoolage children in the state do not have any internet access at home, and 27 percent do not have a high-speed connection, meaning they rely on slower connections like dial-up or satellite service. In addition, nearly 10 percent access the internet with a cellular data plan, which usually means slower speeds and suggests they are relying solely on a smartphone or tablet.

(d) According to the Pew Research Center, the lack of sufficient electronic devices and the lack of reliable internet service increases the probability that pupils will not be able to complete their schoolwork and increases the probability that pupils will become disengaged. In fact, there is evidence that finds pupils without access to a computer at home are less likely to graduate from high school when compared to those who do.

(e) Additionally, given the unprecedented economic, social, and health impacts of COVID-19, many older pupils may face added family responsibilities that detract from completing their education. This includes, but is not limited to, taking care of an ill family member, working to supplement the household income, and taking on childcare responsibilities.

(f) Therefore, it is imperative that the state make an effort to hold harmless those pupils who were otherwise on track to graduate, but are no longer able to due to circumstances that are out of their control as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.

**SEC. 2.** Section 51430 of the Education Code is amended to read:

**51430.** (a) Notwithstanding any other law, a high school district, unified school district, county office of education, or the governing body of a charter school may retroactively grant a high school diploma to a person who has not received a high school diploma if they meet any of the following conditions:

(1) The person was interned by order of the federal government during World War II and was enrolled in a high school operated by the school district or under the jurisdiction of the county office of education immediately preceding their internment and did not receive a high school diploma because their education was interrupted due to their internment during World War II.

(2) The person is a veteran of World War II, the Korean War, or the Vietnam War; was honorably discharged from their military service; was enrolled in a high school operated by the school district or under the jurisdiction of the county office of education immediately preceding their military service in those wars; and did not receive a high school diploma because their education was interrupted due to their military service in those wars.

(3) The person has departed California against their will, as defined in subdivision (d) of Section 48204.4, and, at the time of their departure, was enrolled in grade 12 of a high school operated by the school district, by or under the jurisdiction of the county office of education, or by the charter school; did not receive a high school diploma because their education was interrupted due to their departure; and was in good academic standing at the time of their departure. In making an evaluation as to whether to award a high school diploma to a pupil who meets the conditions of this paragraph, a school district, county office of education, or charter school shall consider any coursework that may have been completed by the pupil outside of the United States or that may have been completed by the pupil through online or virtual courses.

(4) The person was in their senior year of high school during the 2019–20 school year; in good academic standing and on track to graduate at the end of the 2019–20 school year, as of March 1, 2020; and unable to complete the statewide graduation requirements as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.

(b) A high school district, unified school district, or county office of education may retroactively grant a high school diploma to a deceased person who meets the conditions of paragraph (1) or (2) of subdivision (a), to be received by the next of kin of the deceased person.