

# New Law Authorizes Issuance of Retroactive Diplomas to Seniors Prevented from Graduation on Time by the Covid-19 Crisis

October 24, 2020

On September 11, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom signed AB 1350 (Gonzalez), which amends Section 51430 of the Education Code to authorize school districts, county offices of education and charter schools to retroactively grant a high school diploma to any student who was a senior last school year (2019-20), and who was prevented from graduating due to the COVID-19 crisis.

In order to qualify, a senior high school student must have been 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 COVID-19 crisis. This significant legislation adds to previous ceremonial and other grounds for the issuance of retroactive diplomas set forth in section 51430. State high school graduation requirements include three courses in English, two courses in math, two courses in science, three courses in social studies and more. In 2018, Assembly member Lorena Gonzalez authored a bill to change the graduation criteria to allow undocumented high school seniors who were deported to still receive a diploma.

This bill had no opposition and received broad support from school districts. The Legislature recognized that many families and students have been adversely impacted by the COVID-19 crisis, and that some students would have earned their diplomas in June 2020, but did not receive them as a result of the pandemic. Additionally, the Governor's signing of this legislation solidifies guidance provided by the California Department of Education in the spring, which encouraged local school districts to hold students harmless for coronavirus impacts.



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[Click here for the full text of AB 1350 \(Gonzalez\)](#)

We encourage determining which students may be eligible for their diploma in light of this authorization, and notifying families of the option. If you have any questions about this issue or other student matters, please do not hesitate to contact a DWK Attorney in our Student and Special Education (SPED) group.