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SB130 Proponent

Written Only

I am a white woman from Topeka who not once in my life has been punished or marginalized because of how I styled my hair. I support the Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair (CROWN) Act because Black women and men shouldn't be penalized either.

Black Hair Has Always Mattered

When I was growing up, hair was just hair to me. It was not until I met a teenager who taught me that it meant something more to her. As a child of color, hair was integral to her cultural identity and sense of self-worth. I learned the historical reasons:

- Hair was a sacred cultural and spiritual symbol in ancient African societies. Throughout the continent, a person's hairstyle could tell you a lot about who they were and where they came from.
- Slave traders shaved the heads of Africans they captured to dehumanize people and strip away connections to their cultures.
- Braids were sometimes used as an escape tool as cornrows mapped escape routes by resembling roads to travel or avoid. Seeds and small pieces of gold were hidden in the braids.

Hair Discrimination Isn't a Black Problem

I decided to testify because racial injustice isn't fundamentally a black problem, arguably it's a white problem. I suspect you will hear heartbreaking stories of from women of color who were programmed to believe that straight, non-textured hair is the best way to gain acceptance and economic security in the workplace. There are countless examples about missed economic opportunities because of hairstyles. I hope you'll listen to them, and I hope they don't feel alone in this fight.

It benefits everyone when instead of judging Kansans on their hair, people should expect and demand to be judged by their performance and ideas. So many things the legislature will tackle this year are complicated. This one is not. While the Kansas Legislature cannot stop bigotry, you can take action to end hair discrimination. SB130 is a step in the right direction.