

Testimony in Support of SB130

By (Danielle Johnson dcajohnsonict@gmail.com)

To the Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee, Committee Chairman Sen. Robert Olson, Vice Chair Sen. Richard Hilderbrand, Ranking Minority Member Sen. Oletha Faust-Goudeau and committee members thank you for your time and listening to the testimonies before you today. I am a Kansan through and through and I see this bill as an opportunity for all people to see themselves as Kansans where they work, live, and play. I'm a biracial woman who has experienced discrimination based on my hair. This bill helps to protect people from race-based hair discrimination in schools and jobs. Some may be thinking what does hair have to do with discrimination. I would ask those of you in the room how often do you have to think about your hair? How often has a complete stranger walked up to you and run their fingers through your hair? How often is your hair a topic of discussion in meetings?

I find myself fielding questions about my hair regularly. I find myself the point of education on hair and other diversity facets. I'm happy to serve in that space as I'm a diversity and inclusion practitioner, but not every diverse or minority person wants to serve in that way. They also shouldn't face discrimination and field questions around hair in the day and age of Google, YouTube, and other resources that can educate on different textured hair and styles. I live in a space where I'm often the only one in the room with braids or other protective styles. This bill is truly about people not feeling othered or an alien because of having a hairstyle that is a norm in their culture, but different from those who don't have cross-cultural connections. There also needs to be a policy and/or law when discrimination happens there is recourse. Policies and laws often inform practice. I ask that those who may not understand the importance of this bill because this is not their experience or may not be proximate to those who have experienced discrimination because of their hair listen and empathize with those who have.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to seeing legislation that takes equity seriously and helps to make all people want to stay in Kansas to work, live and play.

Warm Regards,
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