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Resident of Topeka, Kansas
Proponent Testimony of HB2044
For the House Federal and State Affairs Committee

February 13, 2023

Chair Carpenter and members of the Committee,

Thank you so much for the opportunity to provide testimony today. I am a resident of Topeka, Kansas and I am deeply supportive of HB2044, which amends the definition of "race" in the Kansas act against discrimination to include traits historically associated with race, including hair texture and protective hairstyles.

Black Kansans can currently be fired from their jobs for the way they wear their hair. They can still be sent home from school for their natural hair. They can still be kicked off their school sports teams for protective hairstyles. This isn't based on any actual performance or safety concern- it is simply cultural discrimination.

We've all seen the horrifying videos of coaches shaving athletes' hair before allowing them to compete. You may say that things like that aren't happening here in our state, so this law isn't necessary, but According to Dove's CROWN Research Study, conducted to determine how societal norms and corporate grooming policies unfairly affect Black women in the workplace, it found that this problem is far more pervasive than I and many of my fellow white Kansans could ever imagine.

This study found that 80% or 4 out of 5 Black women changed their hair from a natural style in order to fit corporate norms.

From Tennessee to California, laws like this that protect our Black community members have been passed in 18 states so far. Kansas is known as the free state, to historically be a leader in ensuring freedom for all. The fact that Black Kansans are not free from discrimination for their natural hair is inexcusable.

By passing HB2044, this legislative body can align our laws with our will to have economic prosperity and freedom for all. It allows Black Kansans to fully participate in our workplaces and schools without additional worry or consideration of their natural hair. I strongly urge members of this committee to put our free state values into action by favorably passing HB2044 out of committee. Thank you all for your time and I hope you take my testimony into consideration.