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Bill Number: HB 2044
Disposition: Proponent
Written testimony
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Name of interest represented: NAACP Kansas State Conference



Proponent Testimony on HB 2044
February 16, 2023

Thank you to the committee for providing the opportunity to forward written testimony as a proponent of HB 2044.

On behalf of the NAACP Kansas State Conference and its diverse membership, it is time to pass HB 2044. It has been 3-4 years since this bill was first introduced and Kansas has become sandwiched between two states that have already passed similar Crown Act bills - Colorado and Missouri. It has now been over four years since California signed a similar bill into law in July 2019.

The Kansas City Council unanimously passed ordinance 200837 on October 1, 2020, to recognize and honor the rights of people to not be discriminated against by wearing natural hairstyles and seven plus states have passed similar legislation.

Although no one should have to change their hairstyles simply to be recognized as duly qualified professionals in any workplace environment, unfortunately, many people of color feel compelled to in order to eliminate the risk of being fired or worse, not getting hired in the first place.

It would be naive to think that hair discrimination does not exist in Kansas. Black Students and athletes at Highland college alleged discrimination against them for their natural hairstyles. The NAACP received this complaint. The ACLU was one of the entities reviewing the issue.

Let's have HB 2044 serve as a solution to the problem before we are significantly faced with large scale discrimination on the basis of hair discrimination.

As committee members, you have the option to make this bill meaningful through its passing. Had this bill passed a few years ago when it was first introduced, it could have served as a precedent for schools and workplaces and could have prevented discrimination on matters that we have going on in various work and school environments.

HB 2044 is a low hanging fruit that once passed could reap significant and positive results for citizens of Kansas. Now is the time for you to ban hair discrimination and be a part of ensuring rightful protection for Kansans.

Sincerely,

Glenda Overstreet Vaughn, DBA, MBA
Political Action Committee Chair
Kansas NAACP

Kenya Cox, President
Kansas NAACP
NAACP National Board Member