

Donnavan Dillon
Private Testimony
Proponent Testimony of SB 36
For the Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee

Chairperson Thompson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Donnavan Dillon. I was born and raised in Kansas, living in Lawrence for most of my life. I am currently a junior at the University of Kansas pursuing a major in political science and sociology. Being a proud young African American and Kansan I am urging you to not only pass SB 36 but to truly listen to what your black constituents have to say in regards to their lived experience and this important piece of legislation .

It is not often in this building you see legislation that centers around the forgotten concept of the “public good” and even less often that that legislation serves to right the wrongs of historical injustices faced by minorities, more specifically the black community.

SB 36 aims to combat the hair discrimination within our state that black people face from the day they are born. It is one thing to grow up as a minority never feeling a part of a bigger whole, yet it is another to exist on those outskirts and also be told through policy that you are less than for the way you appear and move throughout the world. This is inhumane and you have the power to do something to stop it today.

While hair based discrimination may not be something all of you can relate to, as elected officials it should be something you empathize with and aim to combat with comprehensive policy like SB 36. It was not one “is that your real hair” comment from a colleague or teacher , one burn from relaxers or straighteners, or one 4 hour wash day to be deemed presentable or professional that brought this piece of legislation and supporters from across the state here today. It is rather the emotional and physical trauma faced by your black constituents on a daily basis in relation to the way they naturally appear.

With SB 36 there is the opportunity for you as elected officials to do some good by passing this bill out of committee and seeing it makes it to the governor's desk, something we have not been able to count on you to do in years past. This is not something you could do, it is what you should do as a representative to truly show you stand with the black community. You must listen, observe, and implement policy with the powers you have been given by us to create policy that supports and empowers the black community. By passing SB 36 you are supporting the black community through legitimate policy that affects our daily lives, the way we wake up and move through the world from the day we're born to the day we die.

You also have the power to show the black community and countless people who have spent so much time working on this legislation for several years that our involvement and efforts matter in spaces like this. That when people show up you not only listen but will use your effort, time, and resources as senators to act. This is why I urge you to vote in support of SB 36.