

SB 36 Testimony - 2024 Legislative Session

Committee Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Olivia Hayse and I am the Marketing Director for the Libertarian Party of Kansas. We are a political party working to advance liberty for all Kansans. I personally support the passage of SB 36, a bill that would amend the definition of ancestry in the Kansas Act Against Discrimination to include traits historically associated with ancestry, including hair texture and protective hairstyles.

While I am generally not in favor of a state wielding its power to tell employers how to run their businesses, I do find it extremely important in this case that the State of Kansas lead by example and ensure that no citizen is being denied state services due to ethnic traits like hairstyle. Not only would I like to see the Kansas Act Against Discrimination amended to explicitly state this, I would like to make sure that all state agencies add similar items to their internal Human Resources policies.

According to the 2019 CROWN Workplace Research study, 80% of black women feel they have to change their hair from its natural state to fit in at the workplace. Also black women are 1.5x more likely to be sent home from the workplace because of their hair. According to a 2021 similar study focused on girls in public schools, 100% of black girls in predominantly white schools have experienced hair based discrimination by age 10. (Studies can be found at thecrownact.com).

While this bill would largely benefit black women, I believe it will also benefit all persons of color. It is not uncommon for black men and/or hispanic women to also face similar discriminations based on their hair. While it may seem like a small thing a person can do, to change their hair to fit in, in many cases it's actually asking a human to deny part of their heritage. I believe that Kansas voters and legislators alike value heritage and would like to see us come together to show it.

I thank you each for the ways you serve your constituents, I ask you to consider these points going forward in your work and I ask that you vote in favor of SB 36, with special attention to how it affects state funded resources.

Olivia Hayse
Derby, KS