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Bill Number: Senate Bill 36

Disposition: Proponent

Written testimony

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Name of interest represented: NAACP Kansas State Conference



**Proponent Testimony on SB 36
January 11, 2024**

Thank you to the committee for providing the opportunity to forward written testimony as a proponent of SB 36.

On behalf of the NAACP Kansas State Conference and its diverse membership, we continue to announce that it is time to pass the Crown Act in Kansas. It has been nearly 5 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 and just recently the City of Lawrence. It has been nearly five 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 do so 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.

The passing of Senate Bill 36 would serve as a solution to a problem that could significantly minimize large scale legal situations based on hair discrimination.

We firmly believe that passing the Crown Act will support economic prosperity and may also attract more businesses to our state.

Kansas has long been recognized for its strong work ethic, entrepreneurial spirit, and commitment to economic growth. However, failing to pass the Crown Act puts us at a disadvantage in today's competitive business landscape. Companies seeking to establish or expand their operations consider various factors, including the presence of inclusive policies that promote diversity and eliminate discrimination. By enacting the Crown Act, we send a clear message to businesses that Kansas is a state that values and respects the rights of all individuals, regardless of their hair texture or style.

As committee members, you have an important role in helping to pass this bill with your vote. This vote is meaningful to a community that may or may not impact the majority of those served within your voting districts; however, it is important to note that all Kansans deserve the right to be free of discrimination, and this includes having the ability to wear natural hair styles without prejudice. In fact, 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 currently in various work and school environments.

Senate Bill 36 is a low hanging fruit that once passed, could reap significant and positive results for all citizens of Kansas. Now is the time for you to ban hair discrimination and be a part of ensuring rightful protection for Kansans.

Best Regards,

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Political Action Committee Chair
Kansas NAACP

Kenya Cox, President
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