

# Congress of the United States

## Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Jerrold Nadler  
Chairman  
House Committee on the Judiciary  
2138 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Jim Jordan  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on the Judiciary  
2138 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

September 29, 2021

Dear Chairman Nadler and Ranking Member Jordan,

As the lead sponsors of H.R. 2116 - the Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair Act of 2021, better known as the CROWN Act, we write to express our strong support for this piece of legislation.

Systemic racism comes in many forms, one of those ways is discrimination and bias against ethnic and natural hair styles. The CROWN Act is legislation that is necessary to help address, and eventually end, race-based hair discrimination. As women of color, we personally know the bias that millions like us have felt when it comes to how we present our hair in public. Whether it was during school or at work, we have been told that our hair style was “inappropriate” or “against dress code.” These specific attacks can be traced through American history as part of the means to erase a part of what defines us. Our hairstyles, whether natural locs, cornrows, twists, braids, afros, or any other style, have been falsely regarded as unprofessional and looked down upon. It was another means of trying to change people of color, especially Black women, and have them assimilate into a white normative society. This can no longer be allowed to continue.

Over the years we continue to see story after story of Black men, women, and children being discriminated against due to their hairstyle. Some that come to mind include Andrew Johnson, a student athlete from New Jersey, who was forced to cut his dreadlocks or forfeit a wrestling match. There is also Jurnee Hoffmeyer, an elementary school student from Michigan who had her hair cut down to a couple of inches from her scalp by the school librarian without the child’s permission. These discriminatory policies tend to lead to higher levels of disciplinary actions against students of color, disproportionately Black girls, in our schools. Dress codes that forbid natural hairstyles often lead to suspensions, creating harmful breaks in their classroom continuity at best, and giving students their first brushes with the criminal legal system at worst.

In the workplace, many employers still regulate natural hair and traditional styling with discriminatory dress codes that label Black hair as unprofessional, unkempt, and not allowed. In 2019 the CROWN Coalition conducted a survey of 2,000 American women between the ages of 25 and 64. In their findings, hairstyles that bear a strong association with the Black community, namely locs, braids, and Bantu knots were consistently ranked the lowest for “job readiness.” However, when participants were shown pictures of White women and Black women with the same hairstyle, White women were 25% more likely to be deemed “job-ready” than Black women. In fact, Black professionals were 30% more likely to receive a

formal grooming policy in the workplace, at both the application process and the orientation phase. This survey highlights the discrimination experienced by the Black community when it comes to natural hairstyles. This discrimination seeps into every aspect of life, and it can no longer be ignored.

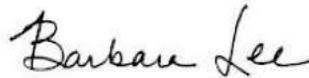
Fortunately, at least a dozen state and several cities across the nation have passed CROWN Acts to protect these communities. Despite the progress, civil right issues must be solved at the national level, otherwise we lead to a patchwork system that protects some people and leaves others behind. The CROWN Act would provide research, statistics, and precedent to support a sense of Congress that there is a need to define and prohibit hair discrimination in the workplace, schools, and housing to enforce the protection of civil rights. It will also prohibit discrimination based on an individual's style or texture of hair by including an individual's style of hair that is tightly coiled or tightly-curled, locs, cornrows, twists, braids, Bantu knots, afros and any other style of hair commonly associated with a race or national origin in the definition of racial discrimination and provides clear definitions that describe the enforcement to protect individuals from this discrimination.

We are asking that the Judiciary Committee favorably report the CROWN Act out of Committee to be taken up for full consideration in the House of Representatives. We strongly support its movement in Congress and look forward to it reaching the President's desk. Thank you for your time and consideration.

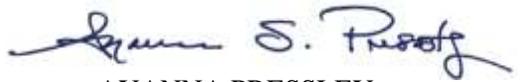
Sincerely,



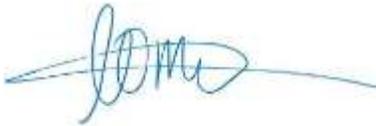
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