



February 2, 2022

Chair Jamie Becker-Finn
House Judiciary Finance & Civil Law
Re: CROWN Act (HF 1315, Agbaje)

Chair Becker-Finn and Members,

The Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage offers the following statement in strong support of the CROWN Act (HF 1315, Agbaje).

The CROWN Act should be passed by your committee because it prohibits the practice of hair discrimination. The CROWN Act adds to the Minnesota Human Rights Act a definition of race that is inclusive of natural hair styles and textures. While Minnesota's human rights law protects against racial discrimination, the pernicious problem of hair discrimination and racial prejudice toward Black natural hair has historically gone unmarked in Minnesota and elsewhere. The CROWN Act will bring clarity to the Minnesota Human Rights Act to ensure that no Minnesotan can be discriminated against because of their natural hair.

Hair discrimination entails unjust treatment (or violation of an individual's human rights) based on racial bias or prejudice against an individual's natural hair. The available research shows that, historically and at present, people of African heritage are the primary victims of discrimination against natural hair styles and textures. In our conversations with community members and partners on this issue, they tell us that prejudice against Black hair persists as a problem for them. Imposing Eurocentric standards of beauty and grooming as the sole criterion for civility, professionalism, respectability puts Black Minnesotans through a racial ordeal that is physically and psychologically taxing and dehumanizing. In addition, our Council believes that this type of human rights violation harms the overall potential and productivity of the Minnesota economy.

Fourteen U.S. states have passed provisions related to the CROWN Act and, as a result, protect against hair discrimination. We hope Minnesota is next in line, and we thank Rep. Agbaje for her leadership in bringing the bill forward. Please support passage of the CROWN Act.

Sincerely,

Linda Sloan | Executive Director
Theodore Rose | Legislative and Policy Director
Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage