



January 4, 2023
House Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee

Dear Chair Becker-Finn and Committee Members,

On behalf of Children's Minnesota, I am writing in support of the CROWN Act (HFXXX, Agbaje) which adds to the Minnesota Human Rights Act a definition of race that is inclusive of natural hair styles and textures. The CROWN Act will ensure that no Minnesotan can be discriminated against because of their hair.

Children's Minnesota is the state's largest pediatric health care system. We serve an incredibly diverse patient population and 46 percent of our patients are insured through Medicaid. At Children's Minnesota we are committed to creating an inclusive environment for our patients. We continue to work to honor this commitment with actions that include: ensuring braids do not need to be removed prior to surgery, making appropriate hair care products available to all patients and creating an employee training on Inclusive Hair Maintenance.

Currently, in Minnesota, it is legal to discriminate against a person in the workplace or in schools because on their natural or protective hairstyles. Black women are more likely to be sent home from the workplace because of their hair and research shows that Black women with locs, twists, or braids are often deemed less professional and are less likely to land job interviews. The same race-based hair discrimination is even happening to our children in local schools. The stories of children being denied school and athletic activities due to the appearance of their hair are heartbreaking not only because of the loss of opportunities for the child but also for emotional harm it inflicts.

Minnesota has made important strides in protecting our children from discrimination and emotional harm. We passed the Safe and Supportive Schools Act to prevent bullying and send a message that our schools should be a safe place for our kids. We passed laws against lunch shaming techniques that were being used as reminders for delinquent lunch accounts. We have acknowledged through policies and practices that when it comes to our children there is no place for shaming, discrimination and exclusion. The CROWN Act is an important next step to ensuring that all children, and their families, are treated equitably and fairly.

At Children's Minnesota, our vision is to be every family's essential partner in raising healthier children. As the kid experts in our community, it is our goal to improve the health and wellbeing of kids in our state. We urge your support for the CROWN Act and look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure all children feel supported and valued.

Sincerely,

Amanda Jansen, MPP
Director of Public Policy
Children's Minnesota