



**Minority whip  
Paula Hicks-Hudson  
House District 44**

Chair Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Member Brown, and the members of the Civil Justice Committee I am gratified today to bring imperative legislation. House Bill 535 known as the “Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair (CROWN) Act” is aimed at banning discriminatory policies and practices that are based upon natural hair textures and styles.

As Representative Brent explained in her testimony, there needs to be a swift change into educational institutions discriminatory policies. These institutions that are put in place to mold young African Americans into outstanding members of society are often the same institutions that mold young African Americans into individuals that are accustomed to dealing with discrimination against them seeing as it is an issue that starts in their schools.

I would like to share a story from a young man from Toledo. Malachi Wattley who attended Toledo Central Catholic, a local private high school. In 2017 his freshmen year at the start of a school day the security guard for the school met Malachi at his locker and escorted him out the building all due to his dreadlocks. Malachi had chosen to grow his natural hair out to more closely connect with his Caribbean roots and dreadlocks are explicitly banned in the Central Catholic student handbook. The school even went as far as to tell the Wattley family that both their students would be removed that being Malachi and his sister who did not have dreadlocks. The school even went as far to say that the hair that is displayed by Malachi is in counter-support to the schools mission which is “rooted in the mission of the Catholic Church and the message of Jesus Christ”.

Ultimately there are too many stories like Malachi’s that have been gone on for far too long. Many that may go unheard. In times like this implementing policies that the normalize acceptance of the differences that make us all unique. I believe that the CROWN act is a continuation of our caucus showing, not only that we work for you but also, we will protect the your right to pursue the American Dream right here in Ohio from head to toe .

Thank you for hearing our testimony today, we are available for any questions you may have.

