



**State Representative Juanita Brent
22nd House District**

Sponsor Testimony – House Bill 178

Chair Hillyer, Vice Chair Mathews, Ranking Member Galonski, and the members of the Civil Justice Committee. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify today in support of House Bill 178 known as the “Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair (CROWN) Act”.

The C.R.O.W.N. Act would make it unlawful for any school, housing, or employment organization to discriminate against anyone based on their physical traits. Hair discrimination is rooted in systemic racism, and its purpose is to keep non-whites out of spaces they deserve to be in. Hair discrimination is not new. There was a hierarchy separating Black slaves by skin tone and hair texture since slavery. This hierarchy of hair types continues to impact social structures today. Black Hair continues to be seen as unprofessional and unkempt in its natural state.

A 2023 joint Dove and LinkedIn workplace research study analyzing the impacts of Race-based hair discrimination found that Black women are disproportionately affected by hair-based discrimination. Black Women’s hair is 2.5x more likely to be perceived as unprofessional and 2x as likely to be the recipient of macroaggressions.

In educational institutions, students are receiving undue punishments and unfair treatment from educators and students alike. The institutions meant to develop our students are diminishing their self-image and self-worth. These hairstyles being judged as unprofessional are intrinsically linked to their race. The protective hairstyles worn within the African American community such as braids, locks, and twists are for the health of their hair and are a core expression of their culture.

In 2020, six-year-old Aston Johnson had to leave Zion Temple Christian Academy in Cincinnati because of his dreadlocks. His natural hairstyle was not permitted in their school. In 2017, fourteen-year-old Malachi Wattleley was banned from Central Catholic High School in Toledo because his dreadlocks were not permitted in their school. Our children should never have to experience discrimination for what they look like and who they are.

The C.R.O.W.N. Act has already been enacted into law in nineteen states. Cities within Ohio, Cincinnati, Columbus, Akron, and Cleveland Heights, have passed their own CROWN Act laws. House Bill 178 is legislation aimed at ensuring that all Ohioans are treated equally regardless of their physical traits. I respectfully ask for this Committee to support House Bill 178. I am willing to address any questions you may have. Thank you.