

## **Proponent Testimony HB 178 CROWN Act House Civil Justice Committee**

**Dear Chairman Hillyer, Vice Chair Matthews, Ranking Member Galonski, and members of the House Civil Justice Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide opposition testimony for HB 178, the CROWN Act.**

Hello, my name is Ladosha Wright. I am a licensed cosmetologist, salon owner, former outreach worker, and a proud member of the Ohio Barber and Beauty Alliance. I am here to testify in support of HB 178, the CROWN Act. The issue of textured hair is complex for many reasons. It is my hope that the passing of this bill can resolve some of them. One of the major reasons there are so many complex issues around textured hair is the lack of education about it. Unfortunately, textured hair has become a symbol of miseducation. That miseducation drives my activism. The CROWN Act requests protection under Civil Rights. I am speaking to you today to not only resolve the issues around natural hair as a civil right, but also as a human right. My testimony highlights three perspectives on human rights to convince you to vote yes on this bill. The first of these is expression. Historically, hair and hairstyles have been used to indicate race and social class in America. Classism makes it difficult for people with textured hair to express themselves freely. This is due to fear, ignorance, and racism, which often lead to Afro-phobia. It is important to understand that the issue is not the hairstyles. Instead, it is the fear of seeing it out of its stereotyped context. You see, when our ancestors worked the plantations for free; our natural textured hairstyles were never a problem. It is 2023, and now working for pay, natural hairstyles are a problem. Natural hairstyles are unacceptable to wear and work legally in the name of representation for businesses in the world of work. You have to admit, that is preposterous. Again, Afro-phobia stemming from the stereotyped context of where natural hairstyles fit in this society is the problem. Now the social construct of race continues to fuel the belief that hair is associated with race, even though experts have deemed race classifications as pseudo-science. It is alarming that school of thought has trickled over into the hair industry. White people educated in Ohio's government-funded schools receive a cosmetology and barber license but cannot comb or style textured hair. This bothers patrons in our industry, especially foster and adoptive parents. The second perspective of education explains why. Despite 97 years of cosmetology and barbering as a profession, Afro hair has never been taught in cosmetology and barbering schools in that 97-year history. As the creator of the first-ever educational summit on Afro hair that will happen in Cleveland this summer, I am testifying that I, along with other licensed barbers and cosmetologists, will ensure that the human right of education around Afro hair happens, and foster/adoptive parents will not have to travel the world to get their children's hair styled. This nonsense must end. My third perspective is fair treatment. As a Black woman, I stand before you as a proud beneficiary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Honestly, I should not be standing here reading this testimony given Charles Sumner wrote the Civil Rights Act of 1875 during the Reconstruction era that was to protect the civil rights of Americans, including African Americans. As a proponent of this bill, I encourage you all to pass it. If this bill passes, it will help establish a legacy of freedom of expression, improved education, and fair treatment for all. They all are great additional ways to grant civil rights to advance Ohioans textured hair in the direction of greatness.