

## Honesty for Ohio Education HB 178 Proponent Testimony

Chair Hillyer, Vice Chair Mathews, Ranking Member Isaacsohn, and members of the House Civil Justice Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Dr. Christina Collins. I am the Executive Director of Honesty For Ohio Education. I'm also a proud parent of several children who attend Ohio public schools.

Honesty is a nonpartisan, statewide coalition representing more than 70 organizations and thousands of students, families, and educators across the state. Our coalition believes firmly that every child, no matter their background, deserves a high-quality education in environments that are safe and supportive. We are, therefore, wholeheartedly in support of HB 178.

The Legal Defense Fund (LDF) has recognized the harmful effects of natural hair discrimination for several decades. [LDF explains](#) that Black people often wear “‘protective hairstyles’ such as braids, twists, and locs to maintain healthy hair and prevent breakage. These hairstyles can be worn for long stretches of time without constant manipulation.”

However, a lack of understanding of natural hairstyles worn by Black students combined with implicit biases against some hair types have far too often led to the removal of Black children from the classroom or from important school activities. This runs counter to supporting Ohio's Whole Child Framework and is especially problematic in school environments where many adults are not well acquainted with the science and proper treatment of Black hair.

In fact, [the Dove 2021 CROWN Research Study for Girls](#) found that a startling 66% of Black girls in majority-white schools had reported experiencing hair discrimination. 87% of these experiences had occurred before they reached 12 years old.

[Research](#) has also found that [Black students](#) are disciplined [four times](#) more often than any other racial or ethnic group, and 70% of all suspensions are discretionary. [The Brookings Institute further explains](#), “Black students are more likely to be suspended for discretionary reasons such as dress code or long hair violations, neither of which have been found to be predictive of student misconduct.”

These unnecessary suspensions can lead to poor academic performance, increased dropout rates, increased arrest rates, and other preventable outcomes.

Black children should never lose access to education for protecting and maintaining the hair that grows naturally on top of their head. And they should never be forced to use harmful chemicals or damaging heat straighteners on their natural hair in an attempt to meet dress codes written for white children.

I ask you to consider my testimony and pass this important bill out of committee. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.