

Opposition Testimony HB 58: 135th Ohio General Assembly

Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Manchester, Ranking Member McNally, and members of the Commerce and Labor Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide opposition testimony for HB 58, the Boutique Services Opportunity Act.

I am Ladoshia Wright, licensed cosmetologist and salon owner.

In 1782 Congress approved the motto *E pluribus unum*. Many historians agree that this "Out of many one," motto for the United States is a sign that the founders saw diversity as a challenge to be mastered. 10 years later, that challenge of diversity was exacerbated by the creation of race in 1792 by Carlos von Linneaus, a Swedish taxonomist. Dividing and classifying people into categories has been proven to be no more scientific than dividing and classifying hair.

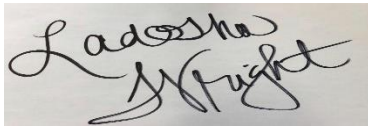
On the surface it may appear that House Bill 58 is one of empowerment and economic freedom to primarily African Americans seeking a disconnection from government in their right to free enterprise within the scope of hair styling. But this school of thought unfortunately reflects the lack of knowing about the history of not educating women who work on Afro hair without science and training beyond public safety and sanitation.

The history of Afro hair care in America and around the world demonstrates our contribution to this industry helped saved this country during the great depression and both World Wars I and II. The division of race in America was so bad that during the Vietnam war African American soldiers refuse to fight the war because they wanted to be respected as Black people who could wear their naturals/Afros. The ending of that race issues was only resolved due to the hard work, education, science, and training on and about Afro hair by the legendary barber of San Diego, California, Dr. Willie Morrow. Dr. Beth Bailey, Army Historian writes in her research that Dr. Morrow's contribution was so successful that to the point it actually ended the drafting of men into the armed forces. That is the history, power, and might of Afro hair. It ultimately ended Jim Crow as we know it.

Please do not confuse the lack of number of bodies in this room with lack of interest. No, it is reflective of a portion of society who are benefiting from the efforts of their predecessors who made what I am here speaking against possible. Most Ohio citizens along with the creator and supporters of this bill are not aware of Afro hair history in America. It may not seem viable, it is. Let us all do the right thing and reimagine this bill by demonstrating *E pluribus unum* the "Out of many one" motto for the United States is no longer a sign that you, the labor and commerce committee of Ohio see diversity as a challenge to be mastered. Do the right thing. Vote no and let us move beyond the ignorance that stifles, disillusions, and fails.

In closing, I would be remiss if I did not take the opportunity to share with you the history of NOT teaching the history, proper science, and techniques associated with Afro hair as outlined in the book, Styling Jim Crow by Julia Kirk Blackwelder. "many untrained women who continued to dress hair without proper education and training were lower wage earners and seldom achieved the economic success or social status accorded with that of the licensed practitioner." Unbeknownst to the creator of HB58, the entire bill has the undertones of that old Jim Crow badge of inferiority on African American in the beauty industry that excludes them from the opportunities that those who work with natural hair on people who are not Black and Brown. In other words, white people will continue to not know how to care for or style Afro hair and Black people will always know how to care for and style white people's hair. I must reiterate natural/Afro hair is not only a feature on Black people. This bill further divides, segregates Blacks and whites; thus, making it very dangerous.

Consider my words and experience. Please vote no.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature reads "Lashon Wright" in a cursive, flowing script. The first name "Lashon" is written on the top line, and the last name "Wright" is written on the line below, with the two names connected by a continuous line.