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JUSTICE OVERSIGHT

February 16, 2023

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2044

Senator Oletha Faust-Goudeau
Proponent Testimony for HB 2044
House Committee on Federal and State Affairs

Good Morning Chair Representative Will Carpenter, Vice Chair Representative Tom Kessler, Representative Jo Ella Hoyer and other distinguished Members of the Committee.

Mr. Chairman thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of House Bill 2044. First and foremost, it's sad that I had to introduce this legislation known as the Crown Act and or the Natural Hair bill in the first place. However, with the National and local media attention regarding those terminated from their jobs or excluded from participating in school sport activities, have compelled me to introduce the bill.

I believe, it's unfair for people who want to work and compete in school sports to be discriminated against because of the style or texture of their natural hair. I also recall when I was in Junior High (middle school) some black classmates were given failing grades in gym classes they didn't suit up to swim. Especially if they had gym class 1st or 2nd hour, because they didn't want to walk around school the rest of the day without their hair looking nice. Mr. Chairman, believe it or not, when African Americans get their hair wet, it's hard to groom it back into a nice style without certain products, which students didn't have with them at school. So, this issue relating to hair has affected many for many years. And, my hope is that House Bill 2044 will rectify this situation.

Colleagues, perhaps you recently saw on the news where the young man will not be allowed to graduate high school if he doesn't cut off his dreadlocks, a part of his culture. Or, maybe you heard about another student who was told by the referee that he must shave off his hair in order to participate in a wrestling meet, or else forfeit. So, in the middle of his school gym with spectators and his opponent watching, his hair was cut off in order to wrestle.

Mr. Chairman, I cried just seeing the pain and humiliation on this young man's face. I don't know if he won his match or not, but the thought of Samson when Delilah cut off his hair and he lost his strength. I have also asked, "Why, is this bill necessary?" I believe that after you hear from the other conferees testifying in favor of HB 2044, today that question will be answered.

Thank you for your time and attention and urge your support.

Thank you, Senator Faust-Goudeau