

Proponent testimony re: HB 2044 - The Crown Act

Hearing scheduled for Wednesday, February 16, 9:00

**Liz Meitl, PhD.**

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**Committee on Federal and State Affairs**

Will Carpenter, Chair

Dear Rep. Carpenter and Committee,

I am writing to you in support of HB 2044, also known as the Crown Act. I am a high school English teacher at Wyandotte High School and my students and I have spent some time looking at this proposed legislation. We've had some thought-provoking discussions, and as usual, I've learned more from them than they've learned from me. My students, who are 98% kids of color, come to a discussion about discrimination with a wealth of experience and expertise that I will never have. Many of my students shared stories about being told they need to fix their hair in order to get a job, or that they need to make sure to keep it "styled" if they want to stay employed.

I know you already know the basics of the argument: Maintaining hair to Eurocentric standards can be costly and time-consuming; it's dehumanizing to equate somebody's skills, manners or habits to an outsider's prescribed maintenance of their hair; and we know hair discrimination happens in Kansas because it's literally written into the manuals of hundreds of employers in our state. That's the explicit context of why you should pass this legislation. However, the implicit, more subtle reason is that we need to do everything we can to level the playing field for our youth, and this is a fundamentally reasonable and thoughtful way to do that.

I ask that you support this legislation. It is an opportunity to make Kansas a better state for all of our young people, and that serves all of us well.

Sincerely,

Liz Meitl