



# Shirley's

## KITCHEN CABINET

### TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 130

March 10, 2022

Chairman Olsen and members of the Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee:

Shirley's Kitchen Cabinet (Shirley's KC) is a non-profit non-partisan organization dedicated to amplifying the voices and power of Black women through education and advocacy, so they can be effective advocates for the issues that matter to them and the communities they serve. Named for Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm, Shirley's KC seeks to educate Black women, wield the collective power of Black women and position Black women for seats at the decision making table so they can influence and challenge the trajectory of public policy to benefit Black women and the world.

Our work to create positive change around issues such as economic prosperity, health and vitality, education, and the eradication of violence is derailed by bias in public spaces. Grooming policies in the workplace and schools that prohibit natural hairstyles such as locs, twist, and braids disproportionately affect Black women and have real social and economic impact. As cases discrimination due to hairstyles and textures continue to rise, we are appreciative for the opportunity to be heard before the committee and provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 130, a bill that will help end discrimination based on hair in Kansas.

- The US Army, Navy and Marine Corps have lifted bans on natural hairstyles that are commonly worn by African-American women. Braids, locs and twist are now included in its list of acceptable hairstyles, *but* these styles are not exempt from meeting current uniformity standards.
- In 2018, a teen applying for employment in Kansas City was denied the role because of his natural hairstyle. A Boston charter school reportedly threatened detention and suspension for black girls wearing box braids, and currently two students in Texas high schools have been suspended until they cut their locs. Workplace and school policies that directly or indirectly target natural hairstyles more likely to be worn by Black Americans allow for discrimination that is currently legal under state law.

We urge Kansas lawmakers to support the end of discrimination based on hair styles. No one should face discrimination in the workplace or in schools for wearing their hair the way it grows naturally. All Kansans should be allowed to celebrate their natural beauty without fear of judgment or consequence. Thank you for your time and attention. We welcome any questions you might have and are happy to serve as your resource on this important issue.

Respectfully submitted,

**Michele L. Watley**  
Founder - Shirley's Kitchen Cabinet