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February 11, 2020

Mayor Ted Wheeler
City Council Commissioners
City Hall, 1221 SW 4th Ave.
Portland, OR, 97204

Cc: Rep. Janelle Bynum, Senator Frederick, Representatives Smith G, Alonso Leon, Piluso, Senator Manning Jr; Representatives Barker, Clem, Doherty, Gomberg, Gorsek, Greenlick, Helm, Holvey, Keny-Guyer, Leif, Lively, Marsh, Meek, Mitchell, Nathanson, Neron, Nosse, Power, Prusak, Rayfield, Salinas, Sanchez, Schouten, Smith Db, Smith Warner, Sollman, Wilde, Williams, Witt, Senators Beyer, Dembrow, Gelser, Knopp, Prozanski, Roblan, Steiner Hayward, Taylor, Wagner

RE: Support for HB 4107, protection against payment and hair discrimination

Dear Mayor Wheeler, Commissioner Hardesty, Commissioner Fritz, and Commissioner Eudaly:

We, the Human Rights Commission of the City of Portland, are writing today to recommend your support of HB 4107, protection against payment discrimination and hair discrimination in Oregon.

We recommend Portland City Council supports HB4107 because it is a critical first step towards ending discrimination in Oregon for our historically marginalized communities. HB4107 centers the needs of the individual and ‘does not have a disproportionate adverse impact on members of the protected class to a greater extent than the policy impacts persons generally.’ It expands the definition of race to include “physical characteristics that are historically associated with race, including but not limited to natural hair, hair texture, hair type and protective hairstyles as defined in ORS 659A.001.”

The Human Rights Commission would like to amplify the experiences of our Black community members and the historical and systematic racism that is endured due to blatant forms of discrimination based on race, including natural hair styles. Some of our community members have described being denied job opportunities, being bullied in schools, and receiving hate speech because of their natural hair and protective hairstyles. This is an issue that is predominately racist towards Black community members and does not align with the values of Oregonians and Portlanders.

Daniel Franco-Nuñez, Michele Wilson, Rhodes Perry, Brandie Dieterle DelaHoz,
Crystallee Crain, Sonia Marie Leikam, Coi Vu, Chris Wallace Caldwell, Jamila Dozier

In addition, discrimination against use of cash affects predominantly communities of color, the houseless population, undocumented community members, and seniors who may not have access to credit cards, bank accounts, or documentation.

In supporting HB4107, the City of Portland would be joining New York, New Jersey, and California, in extending protections against discrimination based on hair texture and protective styles. Twenty-two additional states are considering their own anti-discrimination bills, including Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nebraska, and Washington.

The Human Rights Commission believes the implementation of HB4107 is a critical step toward the implementation of protective factors for our most vulnerable Oregonians to ensure that Oregon is safe and equitable for all.

The Human Rights Commission works to eliminate discrimination and bigotry, to strengthen inter-group relationships, and to foster greater understanding, inclusion and justice for those who live, work, study, worship, travel and play in the City of Portland. In doing so, the Commission is guided by the principles embodied in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Sincerely,
The Human Rights Commission of the City of Portland

Daniel Franco-Nuñez, Michele Wilson, Rhodes Perry, Brandie Dieterle DelaHoz,
Crystallee Crain, Sonia Marie Leikam, Coi Vu, Chris Wallace Caldwell, Jamila Dozier