



Uju Nwizu

May 13th, 2021

Senate Committee on Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation

RE: Support HB 2935 the CROWN Act

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and members of the committee:

My name is Uju Nwizu, and I live in Northeast Portland. I'm proud to be testifying in support of HB 2935, the CROWN Act.

When asked what brings me the most joy, I will often respond with "Black hair". Not only is it a source of cultural strength and pride, but also a continual opportunity to connect, share stories, and express care with our family and loved ones. I remember sitting in my mother's lap as she braided my hair and greased my scalp in preparation for many a picture day. I have fond memories of bonding with my best friends as we discuss the latest styles we hope to wear soon, and hold deeply all the conversations I have had with my younger brother as I style his hair in twists. I note this because I want to start my testimony grounded in joy, love, and strength. This bill will not only protect Black folks from workplace and school discrimination with regards to their hair, but also create more opportunities for us to experience the invaluable opportunity for us to be as we are and love ourselves as well as each other.

It is out of this same love, that I have been organizing to pass the CROWN Act with Forward Together Action. Earlier this year, I co-led a community event with our Black community members here in Oregon to center and uplift Black hair beauty, Black hair joy, and Black hair stories. We took time to share with one another positive memories we each had about Black hair, which reiterated the need for this piece of legislation. Amidst the positive memories shared, there were stories where folks had been denied jobs, harassed in the workplace, and banned from school events because of their hair. It is unfortunate, to say the least, that our stories continue to be mired by the discrimination Black folks and Black hair experience. We deserve the freedom to participate in school events and work in our places of employment without the worry of racial discrimination due to our hairstyles.

Lastly, in addition to organizing with Forward Together Action, I work as a strategist at Oregon Health Equity Alliance. Black folks experience several negative health consequences due to hair discrimination. [Studies](#) have shown that there are high levels of toxic chemicals in Black hair care products, particularly those used to alter hair to fit in with Eurocentric and white standards of professionalism. These chemicals have been linked to breast cancer and infertility. Additionally, the [cumulative impact](#) of experiencing



microaggressions and discrimination based on our hair negatively impacts our mental and physical health, contributing to the health disparities we see in our community.

Black people are beautiful and deserve to be themselves without risks to their health, education, or employment. Please vote yes and support HB 2935. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Uju Nwizu

Forward Together Action

5020 NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd Portland, OR 97211