

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

December 15, 2022

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McConnell,

We, as members of the Congressional Black Caucus, write to request that the Senate consider and pass the Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair (CROWN) Act (H.R. 2116). As negotiations continue for end-of-year legislation, we urge you to prioritize legislation that will ensure workplaces and schools are safe for all Americans. The CROWN Act would help bring an end to race-based hair discrimination and remove a massive and entirely illogical educational and employment barrier facing African Americans.

Unfair policies, biases, and a lack of legal protections have created fundamental differences in educational outcomes and employment opportunities. In the school setting, Black students are disciplined at a rate four times higher than any other racial or ethnic group, and research has found that 70 percent of all suspension disciplines are discretionary, many stemming from dress code violations, including “unapproved” hair styles.¹ Meanwhile, in the workplace, bias against ethnic and natural hairstyles contributes to reduced opportunities for job advancement, particularly for women.²

This is not “just a hair” issue, this is a Civil Rights issue. Hair-based discrimination remains a source of racial injustice with serious economic consequences for Black people. Yet, current interpretations of Civil Rights legislation often limit anti-discrimination protections to skin color, but not hair. This continues to leave many Black people vulnerable to discriminatory practices.

The CROWN Act bridges the gap in current anti-discrimination legislation. This bill would prohibit discrimination based on an individual’s style or texture of hair by including an individual’s style of hair that is tightly coiled or tightly-curved, locs, cornrows, twists, braids, Bantu knots,

¹ <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/how-we-rise/2021/02/23/penalizing-black-hair-in-the-name-of-academic-success-is-undeniably-racist-unfounded-and-against-the-law/>

² <https://www.fuqua.duke.edu/duke-fuqua-insights/ashleigh-rosette-research-suggests-bias-against-natural-hair-limits-job>

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Afros and any other style of hair commonly associated with a race or national origin in the definition of racial discrimination.

We are at a pivotal moment. The CROWN Act has become law in 19 states and many municipalities.³ It is also bipartisan in both the House and Senate. Additionally, the Administration has expressed their strong support for the CROWN Act.⁴ Now is the time to ensure federal passage to guarantee all Americans have the same protections. As we close out the 117th Congress, we urge you to pass the CROWN Act to ensure all Americans are fairly protected under the law.

Thank you for your consideration. We stand ready to assist your efforts.

Respectfully,



Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress



Stacey E. Plaskett
Member of Congress



Shontel Brown
Member of Congress



Henry "Hank" Johnson
Member of Congress



Donald Payne Jr.
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Terri Sewell
Member of Congress



Nikema Williams
Member of Congress



Gwen Moore
Member of Congress



Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress

³ <https://www.thecrownact.com/about>

⁴ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/SAP-H.R.-2116.pdf>

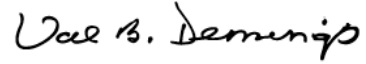
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G.K. Butterfield
Member of Congress



Emanuel Cleaver
Member of Congress



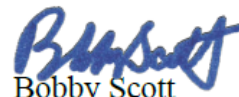
Val Demings
Member of Congress



Steven Horsford
Member of Congress



Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



Bobby Scott
Member of Congress

/s/

André Carson
Member of Congress



Al Green
Member of Congress



Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress



Bennie Thompson
Member of Congress



Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress



Brenda L. Lawrence
Member of Congress