

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 22, 2021

The Honorable Kamala Harris
Vice President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20200

Dear Vice President Harris:

As a woman of color, we know that you understand personally the ways in which bias – overt discrimination and its equally harmful unintentional and systemic counterparts – shapes so much of the world. It changes access to educational achievement, career progress, health outcomes, and more. We know that you are deeply committed to ending these biases, and using your office to ensure equitable access and opportunity for everyone. We ask that, among your priorities, you advocate for the passage of the CROWN Act.

Having co-sponsored this legislation during your time in the U.S. Senate, we know that you are well aware of its importance. In schools, hair discrimination plays a role in the higher rates of school discipline Black youth, in particular Black girls, experience. Black students are disciplined at a rate four times higher than any other racial or ethnic group, creating harmful breaks in their classroom continuity at best, and giving students their first brushes with the criminal justice system at worst.

Meanwhile, in the workplace, bias against natural and ethnic hair styles holds people of color back from career advancement. One study found women with curly afros, braids or twists, are often perceived as less professional than Black women with straightened hair – perceptions that reduce their chances for promotions, raises, and more. This phenomenon is not limited to women, the hairstyles of Black men are often policed and criminalized. Black folks of all genders with braids and locs are subject to the same biases.

We are no doubt sharing information you have either seen previously or experienced yourself at some point in your career. Your familiarity with hair discrimination, along with your elevated platform, make your support of this bill and the incredible impact it could have, all the more important. We ask that you continue to push for its passage in your new role and look forward to partnering with you to that end.

Sincerely



BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN
Member of Congress



BARBARA LEE
Member of Congress

Handwritten signature of Ayanna Pressley in blue ink.

AYANNA PRESSLEY
Member of Congress

Handwritten signature of Ilhan Omar in blue ink.

ILHAN OMAR
Member of Congress

Handwritten signature of Gwen Moore in blue ink.

GWEN MOORE
Member of Congress