



February 28, 2020

To: The Senate Rules Committee

From: Erin Waters, Community Leader, Forward Together Action

Re: Support of HB 4107

Dear Chair Burdick and Members of the Committee,

Forward Together Action is an affiliated organization of Forward Together, which is in its 30<sup>th</sup> year of organizing, movement building and power building for communities of color. Forward Together Action pushes for the changes needed to create systems that serve all of us. We know that when women of color, gender nonconforming people and Indigenous communities lead---and lawmakers listen---we all win. I am writing to you today in support of HB 4107, the CROWN Act bill.

I moved away from a state because it had no explicit protection for people with locks. Alabama has recently affirmed through a negative case ruling against Black women with locks that there is no protection for people like me. After moving to Oregon and taking retail jobs, it was clear my hair was an issue. It had to be up and controlled despite white coworkers with long hair being told having theirs down was beautiful. After having locks in my hair for fifteen years, I would leave the state if it was clear that my hair doesn't get protection -- white hair does. We still struggle with having peoples' hair styles respected.

The CROWN Act needs to be passed because it's very clear businesses preserve an image, and that image is racist. It's clear that certain hair styles and hair management that are considered acceptable for white people but not for black and brown folks. In Alabama people have been forced to cut their hair off to keep their job, and I, too, have



been penalized for how my hair grows out of my head naturally. It's frustrating to think that is something that wouldn't be protected. Someone who does not fit the correct image have to do with things that are racist. When I have locks, I am treated as though I am dirty and unkept. Having the CROWN Act be passed is incredibly important to me because it tells me that the way my hair grows and looks is protected. I've worked hard as a transgender woman to protect and present myself, and this is important to me. If Oregon does not protect me, I will have to leave it.

Oregon has been hostile to Black identities since its inception, which was intentional, and not protecting our identities plays into generational narratives of not accepting us for who we are. If we want to be a state who protects people for who we are, the CROWN Act includes that and creates a much better platform for us to be treated as equals. It says I don't have to give up parts of my culture or my identity just to be able to go work just as everybody else does.

Please support HB 4107. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Erin Waters

Forward Together Action Community Leader

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