



February 25, 2020

To: The Senate Labor and Business Committee
From: Michele Ruffin, Oregon Political Director, Forward Together Action
Re: Support of HB 4107

Dear Chair Taylor and Members of the Committee,

Forward Together Action is an affiliated organization of Forward Together, which is in its 30th 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 the Non-Discrimination Act of 2020, which addresses two key policies to ensure that all Oregonians are safer and can better access retail establishments.

This legislation addresses two ways in which we still see discrimination play out today. One way is through cash discrimination, where places of business do not take cash. According to the FDIC 16.9% of African-American families and 14% of Hispanic/Latino families did not have bank accounts in 2017.¹ If we know that families of color are five times more likely to be unbanked or underbanked, it's important for us to ensure that they, and every family in Oregon, have access to public accommodations such as stores, restaurants and other retail establishments regardless of their banking status.

The second way this legislation addresses discrimination is through racially-specific hairstyles. We know that Black communities continue to endure anti-Blackness and discrimination based on wearing natural hair and specific hairstyles, and that a policy like the CROWN Act would be an important step in Oregon's commitment to protect

¹ <https://www.fdic.gov/householdsurvey/>



Black students and workers from discrimination for their hair. To give an idea of what kind of impact this discrimination has on Black communities, a survey done in 2019 by the CROWN Act coalition found that:

- Black women receive corporate grooming policies more often than non-Black women do. In fact, Black women are 30% more likely to get the corporate grooming policies handed to them than non-Black women.²
- A Black woman is 80% more likely to change her natural hair to meet social norms or expectations at work.³
- Black women are 50% more likely to be sent home or know of a black woman sent home from the workplace because of her hair.⁴

We've heard many stories from across the country and right here in Oregon from community members with all too familiar stories about having their hair cut in order to participate in a school activity or being told to change their hairstyle in order to be more valued or seen in public spaces. No one should be made to feel less than because of their natural hair—unfortunately, this is unacceptable reality, which is why we applaud Representative Bynum and others who are working to pass this important bill.

Forward Together Action respectfully asks for your support of the Non-Discrimination Act of 2020 but voting yes on HB 4107.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Michele Ruffin

Oregon Political Director

Forward Together Action

² <https://www.thecrownact.com/research>

³ <https://www.thecrownact.com/research>

⁴ <https://www.dove.com/us/en/stories/campaigns/the-crown-act.html>