

Dear Chair Power, Vice Chair Wallan and members of the committee:

I am writing in support of HB 2935 CROWN ACT.

As a child, growing up in Flint, Mi, my hair was relaxed at the age of 10. My mother, and family, knew the pain of little Black girls teased for the way our hair grows naturally from our scalps, because they had experienced that themselves.

The idea of wearing my natural hair never even occurred to me until I was a student at Howard University, and saw other Black women proudly wearing their natural hair. I knew then, that going natural would only make it more difficult for me to be admitted to medical school. While in medical school, again, I considered "going natural" after the majority of my hair was burned off by a relaxer. I knew that doing so would decrease my ability to be accepted into residency. I did not become comfortable with the idea of learning my own hair pattern, until I owned my own practice.

14 years later, there are young Black female physicians who are still making the decision to expose themselves to harsh chemicals to be acceptable to medical school and residency admission panels. To know that wearing your hair as it naturally grows from your scalp is an impediment to education and employment is a weight that ONLY Black women have had to bear since Reconstruction. Now, we see Black women with natural hair everywhere. It is in our art, on TV, and more and more, professional women who are not concerned about employment are taking the risk of wearing our hair as it grows out of our scalp. We are taking our health into consideration by choosing to no longer expose our scalp and bodies to harmful chemicals. We are also trying to expose our children to the beauty of the diversity of Black and Brown women and our hair.

Oregon has an extensive history of racism and discrimination when it comes to Black people, Black women, our hair and our bodies. This is still prevalent in this state, a state where I made the decision to go natural only after I owned my own practice. Despite no longer needing to worry about an employer's response to my decision, I did have to endure the behavior of the nurses and hospital staff, and their comments to my patient's regarding their perception on my professionalism. Black women and children in Oregon have been sent home from work and school for wearing Afros, twists, braids, and other natural hair styles. These behaviors and actions reinforce the Eurocentric view of beauty to other students, who are the future coworkers and professionals who then act out on these lessons and discriminatory actions.

Please pass this legislation. It is very important that the State of Oregon start to reverse some of the harm that the effect of white supremacy in this state has caused to the Black community.

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Jack and Jill of America is a national and local mothers' organization which exists to help black children grow to be the best versions of themselves.