



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1444

Discrimination- Definition of Race-Hair Texture and Hairstyles

Health and Government Operations

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Submitted by Stacey Jefferson and Margo Quinlan, Co-Chairs

Member Agencies:

Advocates for Children and Youth
Baltimore Jewish Council
Behavioral Health System Baltimore
CASH Campaign of Maryland
Catholic Charities
Episcopal Diocese of Maryland
Family League of Baltimore
Fuel Fund of Maryland
Health Care for the Homeless
Homeless Persons
Representation Project
Job Opportunities Task Force
League of Women Voters of Maryland
Loyola University Maryland
Maryland Catholic Conference
Maryland Center on Economic Policy
Maryland Community Action
Partnership
Maryland Family Network
Maryland Hunger Solutions
Paul's Place
Public Justice Center
St. Vincent de Paul of Baltimore
Welfare Advocates

Marylanders Against Poverty

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Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) supports HB 1444 because hair discrimination based on texture and style directly affects African Americans who are judged based on their physical appearance, their culture, or religious beliefs. African American women, men, and children have been denied employment, education, and housing opportunities solely based on their hair styles and/or textures. HB 1444 changes the definition of race in the state to include traits historically associated with African Americans including hair texture, afro hairstyles and protective hairstyles

A person's hair should not prevent them from being employed or having access to quality education. Currently in the state of Maryland 13.6% of Black or African Americans live below the poverty line. In comparison the total rate of poverty in Maryland is 9.6%. ¹MAP continues to support legislation that address the inequities that cause poverty in our state. Hair discrimination is just one of many unnecessary barriers to education and employment opportunities for African Americans that in turn lead to higher rates of poverty and unemployment.

In 2019 the CROWN Coalition along with DOVE published a groundbreaking study that confirmed that workplace bias and corporate grooming policies unfairly impact Black women. The study found that Black women are 1.5 times more likely to be sent home from the workplace because of their hair. They also found that hairstyles such as locs, braids, etc. were ranked the lowest for 'job readiness'. ² This study along with countless stories has helped to lead a national movement to end hair discrimination.

Across the nation, legislation banning hair discrimination is creating change. California and New York were the first states to enact laws this past summer which prohibited race-based hair discrimination.³ This bill will allow Maryland to join the national movement to end hair discrimination policies and protect African Americans who express their culture and or religious beliefs through their hair texture and hairstyles.

MAP appreciates your consideration, and urges a favorable report on HB 1444

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) is a coalition of service providers, faith communities, and advocacy organizations advancing statewide public policies and programs necessary to alleviate the burdens faced by Marylanders living in or near poverty, and to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty.

¹ http://mapadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Maryland-Poverty-Profiles_2020-FINAL.pdf

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

³ Nicquel terry Ellis, and Charisse Jones USA TODAY Oct 14, 2019 "Banning Ethnic hairstyles upholds this notion of white supremacy. States pass laws to stop natural hair discrimination."