

CROWN Act- HB 1444

Discrimination - Definition of Race - Hair Texture and Hairstyles

Hello Madame Chair Shane Pendergrass, Vice Chair, Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk and members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak in support of HB 1444.

My name is Kristie Patton Foster, Executive Director, The Links, Inc. and I am here to represent one of the founding organizations of the CROWN Coalition. The Links, Inc. is an organization of The Links, Incorporated is an international, not-for-profit corporation, established in 1946. The membership consists of more than 16,000 professional women of color in 288 chapters located in 41 states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, and the United Kingdom. It is one of the nation's oldest and largest volunteer service organizations of extraordinary women who are committed to enriching, sustaining and ensuring the culture and economic survival of African Americans and other persons of African ancestry.

Because of our founding principles in advancing women of color, we are glad to support this very important legislation that defines and addresses the discrimination that people of color face because of their natural hair.

Our hair represents our strength...our hair represents our boldness...our hair represents our power. And it is no ones right to take that away! And this is why The Links Inc., stand in support of HB 1444!

The CROWN Act (**C**reating a **R**espectful and **O**pen **W**orld for **N**atural **H**air) expands the definition of race to include traits historically associated with it, such as hair texture and hairstyle.

It provides protection against hair discrimination in both the workplace and in K-12 public and public charter schools.

And the CROWN Coalition is a national alliance dedicated to outlawing hair discrimination! It was cofounded by National Urban League, Dove, Color of Change, and a Western Center for Law and Poverty. Which The Links, Inc. is a founding member. This coalition is made up of more than 10 other organizations dedicated to women of color. Adjoa B. Asamoah leads the legislative advocacy efforts for the CROWN Coalition.

Other organizations that belong to the coalition are Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., The Links, Inc., Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., LDF, NAACP, NCNW, National Action Network, Association of Black Psychologists, US Black Chambers of Commerce, NOBEL Women, AAMA, NBCSL, Black Women's Roundtable, etc."

The CROWN Act was first introduced in California in February 2019 BUT was "passed" first by Assemblywoman Tremaine Wright in New York! The bill essentially tackles unjust grooming policies that have a disparate impact on Black women, men and children, despite them being seemingly neutral on their face.

The Links, Inc. is proud to stand with us, and be the part of the national movement.

Collectively, we're changing things.

Three (4) states have signed it into law! NY, Cali, NJ, VA.

Additionally, Colorado has passed it, and the bill await the governor's signature.

It's now Maryland's time to take action. To date the Black population in Maryland is **1,738,618 (29.2%)** of the total population of Maryland. It is time to protect their human rights and prevent discrimination in the workplace.

I urge your support and to stand with the CROWN coalition in protecting the rights of its constituents!

