

HB 284 -- DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES

SPONSOR: Proudie

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Special Committee on Urban Issues by a vote of 5 to 0.

This bill establishes the "Missouri Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair (Missouri CROWN) Act", which governs discriminatory practices as they relate to "protective hairstyles", as defined in the bill.

This bill specifies that no person will be subjected to discrimination based on the person's hair texture or protective hairstyle, if that protective hairstyle or texture is commonly associated with a particular race or origin, in any program or activity conducted by an educational institution that receives or benefits from "State financial assistance", as that term is defined in the Act, or that enrolls pupils who receive State student financial aid; provided, however, that such institution may require the use of hair nets or coverings or may require that hair be secured for safety purposes in any career and technical training course or class to comply with safety regulations and standards of the course or class throughout the duration of the course or class.

The provisions of this bill do not apply to an educational institution that is controlled by a religious organization if the application of such provision would not be consistent with the religious tenets of that organization.

This bill is similar to HB 1900 (2024).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that natural hairstyles can tell the story of a person's culture and heritage. Allowing children to wear natural hairstyles is fundamental to dignity and should be a right of every person to be their authentic self. Parents rely on social institutions to make safe and secure learning environments for their children. Worrying about discipline in school for something a child cannot help is one more stressor that could impede a child from thriving. No person should be disciplined or denied participation in a school function based on aspects of their appearance that can't be changed.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Proudie; Abortion Action Missouri; Ebony Williams; National Association of Social Workers Mo Chapter; Krystal Barnett, Bridge 2 Hope Parent Institute; Marcel Hagens, Action St. Louis Power Project; and Nimrod Chapel Jr., NAACP State Conference.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony and witnesses testifying online can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.