

CCS HCS SS SB 160 -- EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

This bill creates the "Missouri Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair (Missouri CROWN) Act", which governs discriminatory practices in elementary and secondary educational institutions as they relate to protective hairstyles. The bill defines an "educational institution" as including any public or private prekindergarten program, public or private elementary or secondary school, charter school, or public or private school board, charter school governing board, or other school administrative body.

Under the bill, educational institutions that receive State financial assistance or enroll students who receive State financial aid will not discriminate based on a person's hair texture or protective hairstyle if it is commonly associated with a particular race or origin. However, educational institutions can require hair nets, coverings, or secured hair for safety reasons in career and technical training courses, as needed to meet safety regulations.

These provisions will 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 (Section 160.082).

The bill gives the Missouri State University board of governors the power and authority to grant doctor of philosophy degrees in disciplines other than engineering and to grant bachelor of science degrees in veterinary technology (Sections 172.280 and 174.160).

This bill prohibits public institutions of higher learning, such as State colleges, community colleges, and technical schools, from taking adverse action against a student association because of the association's beliefs or the actions of its leaders. Specifically, these institutions will not deny a belief-based student association, such as a political, ideological, or religious association, any benefits that are available to other student groups, including access to campus facilities and communication channels. A belief-based student association will be responsible for defining its own mission, beliefs, practice requirements, and conduct standards. A belief-based student association can seek relief in a judicial or administrative proceeding against an institution that violates the provisions of the bill.

The provisions of this bill will not apply to a belief-based student association if there is substantial evidence that such association's viewpoint or expression of the viewpoint would materially and substantially disrupt the educational environment or interfere with the rights of others, in accordance with the U.S.

Supreme Court's decision in Healy v. James, 408 U.S. 169 (1972) (Sections 173.1555 and 173.1556).

The bill provides that the offense of hazing will be known as "Danny's Law", and provides that a person is guilty of the offense of hazing if a person knowingly, actively, and not under duress participates in, solicits another person to participate in, or causes or plans a willful act that endangers a student or prospective member, current member or former member of organizations under the sanction of a public or private college or university. The acts of hazing are specified in the bill.

This bill provides that a person will not be guilty of the offense of hazing if the person establishes that he or she:

- (1) Was present at the event where hazing occurred and a person was in need of immediate medical assistance;
- (2) Was the first person to call 911 or campus security to report the need of immediate medical attention;
- (3) Provided the relevant information to the 911 operator or campus security; and
- (4) Remained at the scene until medical assistance arrived and cooperated with such assistance.

Additionally, this bill provides that a person will be immune from prosecution if the person can establish he or she rendered aid to the hazing victim before assistance arrived (Section 578.365).