

Legislative Toolkit

THE CROWN ACT

Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair

OVERVIEW

Document Purpose

- To help Minnesotans learn about the CROWN Act, the necessary pathways of its movement through the legislative process, and how Minnesotans can take direct action to ensure that the bill passes in the Minnesota Legislature and becomes law in 2022.

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ABOUT THE MINNESOTA CROWN ACT

1) Bill Information

- Bill Numbers: HF 1315 in MN House, SF1273 in MN Senate
- Lead Authors: Representative Esther Agbaje (59B), Senator Bobby Joe Champion (59)

2) What is the CROWN Act?

- The CROWN Act adds a definition of race to the Minnesota Human Rights Act to explicitly protect natural hair styles and textures, including but not limited to "braids, locks, and twists." This will ensure that hair discrimination is legally included as a form of racial discrimination.
- Ultimately, the CROWN Act brings clarity to the Minnesota Human Rights Act to ensure that no Minnesotan now, or in the future, can be discriminated against because of their natural hair.

3) What is Hair Discrimination?

- Hair discrimination is action or injury based on racial bias or prejudice against an individual's natural hair at work or at school. People of African heritage are the primary victims of discrimination against natural hairstyles and textures. Unjust treatment of natural Black hair or Afro-textured hair is shaped by history of anti-Black racism and preference for so-called Eurocentric standards of beauty, civility, and respectability.
- The CROWN research study found that Black women are 1.5 times more likely to be sent home from the workplace because of their hair. Black women are 80 percent more likely than white women to say that they change their hair from its natural state to fit in at work. Research also shows that Black women with natural hairstyles are perceived as less professional than Black women with straightened hair.

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4) Why Should Minnesota Pass the CROWN Act?

- Racial discrimination against Black natural hair harms the African heritage community and hinders the overall potential and productivity of the Minnesotan economy.
- Passing the CROWN Act is an important step toward eradicating racial prejudice and stigma regarding Black natural hair in Minnesota.
- Fourteen U.S. states have passed provisions related to the CROWN Act and, therefore, protect against race-based hair discrimination. The CROWN Act passed in the Minnesota House of Representative in 2020 but did not become state law. Now is the time to pass the bill and make it law.

5) What is Protected and Not Protected by the CROWN Act?

- The CROWN Act **only protects Minnesotans against hair discrimination.**
- The CROWN Act **does not** provide legal protections for any differential treatment due to aspects such as tattoos, piercings, or hair colorings.

HOW TO GET THE CROWN ACT PASSED IN MINNESOTA

I) CROWN Act's Pathway(s) in Minnesota's Legislative Process

- a. A "hearing" in the Minnesota House Judiciary Committee
 - i. The purpose of this hearing will be to vet the bill in front of legislators and allow the public to testify in support of the bill.
 - ii. The CROWN Act will be heard 02/01/2022 or 02/03/2022.
- b. After the bill is heard and passed out of the Judiciary Committee, it will be sent to the "House Floor" so the full House of Representatives can vote on the bill.
 - i. A majority of Representatives must vote in favor of the bill for it to pass on House Floor. Once it is passed, it will be sent to the Senate.
- c. If the Senate does not vote on the bill, which is likely in this scenario, the House will likely include the CROWN Act in an "omnibus bill" at the end of the legislative session.
 - i. This means that the CROWN Act would be one provision within a much larger bill. Legislators use the "omnibus bill" strategy as an efficient way to pass multiple policies at one time. However, legislators negotiate a lot of what ultimately is included or not included in an "omnibus bill".
 - ii. To ensure the CROWN Act is included in an omnibus bill at the end of session, supporters of the CROWN Act will need to contact their legislators to show strong community support for the proposal.

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II) Please Take Action to Support the CROWN Act

- a. Contact Your Legislators
 - i. You can contact your legislators to ask them to support the CROWN Act by emailing them or calling their office. **When you are contacting them, make sure you include that you are one of their constituents.** They will take your outreach to them more seriously then. **Also, copy their legislative assistants in your email correspondences.**
 - ii. You can find your legislator and their contact info here:
<https://www.gis.lcc.mn.gov/iMaps/districts/>
- b. Contact House and Senate Leaders and Judiciary Committee Members
 - i. In addition to contacting your own legislator, you can also contact key legislators that will have influence over the outcomes of the CROWN Act. You should employ similar tactics with this type of outreach, by giving a short, clear, and concise email or voice message about why you want them to support the CROWN Act.
 - ii. **House Legislators:** <https://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/members/list>
 - 1. Speaker of the House, Representative Mellissa Hortman
 - 2. Majority Leader, Representative Ryan Winkler
 - 3. Chair of the Judiciary Committee, Representative Jamie Becker-Finn
 - 4. Chair of the “People of Color and Indigenous Caucus”, Representative Samantha Vang
 - 5. Member of the Judiciary Committee, Representative Cedrick Frazier
 - 6. Member of the Judiciary Committee, Representative Athena Hollins
 - iii. **Senate Legislators:** <https://www.senate.mn/members?id=alphabetical>
 - 1. Majority Leader, Senator Jeremy Miller
 - 2. Chair of the Judiciary Committee, Senator Warren Limmer
 - 3. Member of the Judiciary Committee, Senator Andrew Mathews
 - 4. Member of the Judiciary Committee, Senator Ron Latz
- c. Watch the Virtual Public Hearing
 - i. The CROWN Act will be heard in the House Judiciary Committee on either 02/01/2022 or 02/03/2022 between 8:30am-10:00am. The Committee hearing will be conducted over Zoom (due to COVID safety precautions). **Individuals registered to testify will be allowed to log into the “hearing room.” Everyone else can watch or listen to the the hearing via livestream.**
 - ii. You can also support the public hearing ~~are~~ by amplifying public testimony or the hearing itself on Twitter. You can use the hashtag #mnleg. A lot of legislators and public officials track #mnleg on Twitter.

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d. Provide Public Testimony

- i. Public testimony in a committee hearing is a critical tool to show community support for the CROWN Act. Any good “bill hearing” has strong public testimony.
- ii. Testimony for the CROWN Act will be done virtually via Zoom (due to COVID safety precautions). All testifiers should be prepared to speak for between 2-5 minutes. All testimonies should include:
 1. Your name and what part of the state you are from
 2. Your request that the committee support and pass the CROWN Act
 3. Your message about why the CROWN Act is important to you. You can do this either by sharing your own experience with hair discrimination or why you think it’s important to have protections against hair discrimination. Some examples could include sharing an experience where an employer told you that your natural hair was “unprofessional.” Did someone at school ever make you alter your natural hair? Any testimonies where you can talk about your own experiences with your “crown” or with hair discrimination will be powerful, but also know that you don’t have to divulge or say anything that makes you feel uncomfortable.
- iii. Tips for Providing Testimony at Public Hearing
 1. Oral Testimony
 - a. Be yourself
 - b. Speak to your own personal experiences
 - c. Be clear, concise, and to the point
 - d. Have “5 minute” and “2 minute” versions of the testimony prepared in case there are unforeseen time constraints
 2. Written Testimony
 - a. Keep written testimony to 1 page or less
 - b. Write about your own personal experiences
 - c. Be clear, concise, and to the point