March, 4, 2020

Chair. John Lesch

563 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: HF 3101

The Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage offers the following statement in support of HF 3103. The Minnesota Legislature empowered the Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage to advise the Legislature on issues confronting People of African Heritage. That is why we are before you today asking members of this committee to support the Crown Act.

Our country has a long history of discrimination based on traits associated with people of African Heritage, especially when it comes to hair texture and hair styles such as braids, locks, and twists. Sadly it is still an issue many face today.

African Heritage women are 50% more likely to be sent home or know of a woman who has been sent home from the workplace because of her hair. Women of African Heritage are also 80% more likely to change their natural hair to meet Eurocentric standards of appearance, social norms, or expectations at work. The issue of hair discrimination is not solely regulated to women or the workplace. While research on this topic for other genders is still being explored, recent news reports of hair discrimination are becoming more prevalent for all genders.

As we know, our state has some of the highest racial disparities in the country for people of African Heritage. In order to address specific disparities that impact people of African Heritage, the solutions implemented need to be intentional and equitable. The Crown Act is not only one of those solutions, but it is a step in the right direction for our state and our country. Three other states have already enacted legislation, similar legislation is making its way through other state legislative bodies as well as bill at the Federal level.

Hair texture and hair styles are not and should not serve as a predictor of one’s academic or professional performance; or any other qualifier for that matter. That is why the Crown Act is needed to address the specific discrimination that Minnesotans of African Heritage face in our state.

The Minnesota Legislature empowered the Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage to ensure that people of African heritage fully and effectively participate in and equitably benefit from the political, social, and economic resources, policies and procedures of the State of Minnesota. That is why the Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage is urging this body to support the Crown Act today, this change can serve as a move in a more equitable direction to address discrimination.

Thank you,

Justin Terrell

Executive Director Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage

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