



Statement on H.F. # 3664: Bill exempting hair braiders from cosmetology registration requirements.

Saint Paul MN – Prior to April 2006 the Minnesota Board of Barber and Cosmetology Examiners required hair braiders, who are traditionally and primarily African American, to take 10 months of training, totaling around \$15,000 to earn their hair braiding license. The training included no actual courses on how to braid hair. Any braiders who refused faced up to a \$1,000 fine and 90 days in Jail. African hair braiding is largely traditional profession, handed down from generation to generation, and is completely natural, requiring no chemicals.

In 2005, Lillian Anderson, a hair braider, was determined to start a hair braiding business. But she felt the fees for training were cost prohibitive and unfair, considering the traditional and natural nature of hair braiding. She brought a civil rights lawsuit against Minnesota's licensing regulations arguing that the regulations violated braiders' due process, privileges or immunities, and equal protection guarantees provided by the Minnesota Constitution and the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

The case was resolved by Court order on June 10th, 2005 with the Court siding with Lillian Anderson and permanently enjoining the Cosmetology Board from requiring licensing for hair braiding. Due to that decision on May 15th 2006 the State Board adopted new administrative rules that exclude hair braiders from state licensing.

On 3/26/2018 a hearing was held in front of the MN House's State Government Finance Committee. The Bill featured bi-partisan support, having been sponsored by Rep. Rena Moran and brought forward in another committee by Rep. Cindy Pugh. The Bill introduced to the committee, H.F. 3664, takes the 2005 Anderson vs. MN Board of Barbers and Cosmetologists a step further by putting into statute (law) language that clearly exempts hair braiders from cosmetology registration.

Rep. Moran introduced the bill during the hearing and noted that hair braiding is a completely natural and traditional practice that requires no chemicals and thus does not require the same oversight as other forms of hair care. In addition, Minnesota in passing the bill would be joining 23 other states, which have already passed similar legislation, 6 other states are considering similar legislation. Lillian Anderson, spoke in support of the bill because it would allow current and future hair braiders to continue building their businesses and pursuing the American dream.

The Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage fully support this legislation. While the 2005 court decision directed the MN State Barbers and Cosmetologists Board not to require licensing for hair braiders, hair braiding was still not exempt under Minnesota law from licensing requirements. This bill makes that exemption law and removes barriers from African Heritage communities building legitimate businesses that: 1) honor traditional values, 2) provide a much needed service in the African Heritage community and 3) provide financial stability, self-sufficiency, pride and wealth to families.

The Council thanks Lillian Anderson for her continued courage in addressing this culturally and financially critical issue. We'd also like to applaud Rep. Rena Moran for bringing this bill forward on behalf of her constituents and the many hair braiders and their customers in the state of Minnesota.

*Ultimately the bill was referred to be considered for addition to the House State Government Finance Omnibus bill. This means that the bill can still be considered if it is added to a larger bill under the State Government Finance committee.

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. Generally, the Council is charged with the responsibility of:

- Advising the Governor and the Legislature on issues confronting People of African Heritage;
- Advising the Governor and the Legislature on statutes, rules and revisions to programs to ensure that Black people have access to benefits and services provided to people in Minnesota;
- Serving as a liaison to the federal government, local government units and private organizations on matters relating to People of African Heritage in Minnesota;
- Implementing programs designed to solve problems of People of African Heritage when authorized by statute, rule or order; and
- Publicizing the accomplishments of People of African Heritage and their contributions to the state.