

LOUD LIGHT CIVIC ACTION

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Loud Light Civic Action
Written Proponent Testimony of SB36
For the Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee

January 10, 2024

Chair Thompson and members of the Committee,

Thank you so much for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Melissa Stiehler, and I serve as Advocacy Director of Loud Light Civic Action, a Kansas based, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that supports and builds the civic engagement and leadership of young people in our state. Loud Light Civic Action stands strongly in support of SB 36, also known as the CROWN act.

This bill codified into law the long overdue protections for not just Black Kansans, but all Kansans whose natural and protective hairstyles may not be understood as “professional” by those in power who hold misunderstood and outdated standards of professionalism. In recent history, we have seen discriminatory policies in Kansas such as the Girard Unified School District, whose school dress policy would force an 8 year old indigenous child to cut their hair, and Ottawa University, who dismissed a Black cheerleader from her squad for wearing a protective hairstyle.

But this isn’t just about hairstyle preferences. When Kansans are denied jobs because they don’t chemically relax their hair, that is an economic issue. When young people are removed from school and extracurricular activities because of a protective hairstyle, that is an education issue. When 80% of Black women change their hairstyle to fit a corporate norm*, frequently using harmful chemicals in order to do so, that is a healthcare issue.

Young Kansans aren’t staying in our state, because they see more opportunity elsewhere. By passing SB36, this legislative body can align our laws with our will to have economic prosperity and freedom for all and show young people that Kansas is a place they can call home. It allows all Kansans to fully participate in our workplaces and schools without additional worry or consideration of their natural hair. I strongly urge members of this committee to put our free state values into action by favorably passing Sb36 out of committee. Thank you all for your time and I hope you take my testimony into consideration.

*According to [Dove’s CROWN Research Study](#), conducted to determine how societal norms and corporate grooming policies unfairly affect Black women in the workplace