

*Office of the*  
WYANDOTTE COUNTY  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY



DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
*Mark A. Dupree, Sr.*

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29<sup>TH</sup> JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF KANSAS

March 9, 2022

The Honorable Robert Olson, Chairperson  
Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs

Hearing Date: March 10, 2022

**TESTIMONY OF WYANDOTTE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY MARK A.  
DUPREE, SR. REGARDING SENATE BILL 130**

Chairman Olsen, Vice-Chair Richard Hilderbrand, Ranking Member Senator Faust Goudeau, Members of the Committee and staff:

I am the duly elected and serving District Attorney of Wyandotte County, father of two beautiful black daughters, and a proud member of the Commission on Racial Equity and Justice. Our purpose is to find and present policy actions within Kansas that take on racial equity and justice issues and make recommendations to the Legislature, the Governor, and local government. These recommendations include taking concrete and immediate steps to increase racial equity and justice in Kansas.

Here in Kansas, we are the home of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, which vehemently ruled against state laws that established racial segregation in 1954. Therefore, we are leaders of social justice and integration. I stand before you as a proud Kansan, member of the Black and Brown Community, and advocate for social justice and integration. I am a proponent of the CROWN Act and hope that you vote in favor of SB 130, which I believe will promote systemic change both in Kansas and across the country.

The issues addressed by SB 130 are of utmost importance as we continue to increase our awareness of discrimination existing both in our country and in our immediate surroundings: on our jobs, in our schools, in our housing market, and even in our justice system. The truth is, if we are going to move forward, we cannot remain silent to racial inequities that exist in Kansas, specifically concerning our Black and Brown communities.

The word "Crown" in the CROWN Act is an acronym meaning, "Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair." The purpose of this bill is to create a blanket of protection for Black and Brown individuals in Kansas who are more likely to be discriminated against for wearing our hair in a way that accentuates our natural hair textures or hairstyles such as braids, locs, and twists at work or in schools. Too often, Black and Brown people face the pressures of conforming to Eurocentric norms so often, specifically in professional settings, that some take measures detrimental to their health to prevent microaggressions or quiet discrimination. Some

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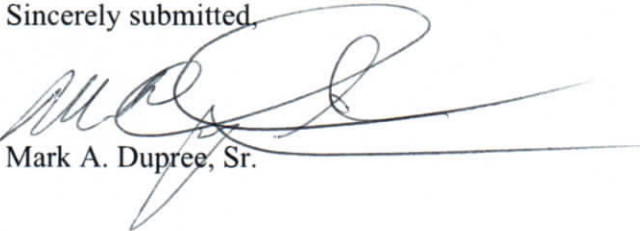
examples of hair discrimination include: An employer not hiring a qualified applicant because their hair is braided; an employer requiring Black and Brown employees to obtain approval before changing their hairstyles, but not requiring approval for other employees; or a restaurant refusing to serve a patron because they wear their hair in locs. This undoubtedly negatively affects our mental and physical health and prevents us from enjoying the same opportunities as our European counterparts. According to a 2021 Dove CROWN Research Study for Girls, 53% of Black mothers whose daughters have experienced hair discrimination say it occurred as early as five years old; 86% of black teens who experience hair discrimination say they experienced it by age 12; and 100% of elementary school girls in majority-white populated schools report experiencing hair discrimination or bias by age 10.

While Black or Brown individuals experience this every day, these issues are not always widely publicized. Our cultural and racial differences are our reality. I believe it is essential to acknowledge and respect our cultural and racial differences and not judge one another for them. Wearing our natural hair textures should not impede how others perceive our level of professionalism, integrity, or success. Black and Brown people should be perceived based upon nothing less than character and ability.

The CROWN Act is law in states like Colorado, Oregon, Delaware, New Mexico, Connecticut, Maryland, California, Virginia, New Jersey, New York, Washington, and Nebraska, and cities like Tucson, Arizona; Kansas City, Missouri; Covington, Kentucky; Broward County, Florida; several counties in Georgia; Saint Louis, Missouri; and Kansas City, Missouri, just to name a few. As leaders of civil rights, racial equity, and desegregation, Kansas should follow suit.

As a member of the Commission of Racial Equity and Justice, I am in full support of this bill, and I hope you will vote in favor of creating a respectful and open world for Kansans to wear our natural hair.

Sincerely submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark A. Dupree, Sr.', written over a horizontal line.

Mark A. Dupree, Sr.