Title: A PROCLAMATION STATING SUPPORT FOR WEST VIRGINIA STATE SENATE BILL 850

Whereas, West Virginia University’s Mission Statement commits to “creating a diverse and inclusive culture that advances education, healthcare and prosperity for all;” and

Whereas, the West Virginia University Student Government Association’s Mission and Vision promote the principles of diversity and inclusion; and

Whereas, hair discrimination remains all too familiar to many communities of color, who often find their hair policed by dress codes in schools, in athletics, and in the workplace; and

Whereas, according to the 2016 “Good Hair” study by the Perception Institute¹, a majority of individuals show implicit bias against textured hair; and

Whereas, on December 18, 2019, Matthew Moore, a freshman basketball player at Woodrow Wilson High School in Beckley, West Virginia was benched by the head coach because his dreadlocks were not considered that of a “neat” haircut²; and

Whereas, the CROWN (Create a Respectful and Open Workplace for Natural Hair) Research Study³ released by Dove in 2019 found that black women are 50% more likely to be sent home from the workplace because of their hair and 80% of black women feel the need to change their hair from its natural state to “fit in;” and

¹ https://perception.org/goodhair/results/
³ https://www.thecrownact.com/research
Whereas, Dove also found that black women’s hair is 3.4x more likely to be perceived as unprofessional when compared to other hair types; and

Whereas, pervasive discrimination against natural hair remains a significant barrier to the academic, athletic, and professional advancement and prosperity of men and women of color; and

Whereas, no United States federal law currently affords protection for race-based hair discrimination, even if the hairstyle is inherent to racial identity; and

Whereas, the CROWN Act legally ensures protection against discrimination based on hairstyles by extending statutory protection to hair texture and protective styles; and

Whereas, New Jersey, Tennessee, Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Ohio have all proposed legislation to prohibit “race-based hair discrimination”, with California and New York enacting similar legislation in July of 20194; and

Whereas, West Virginia Senate Bill 850, also known as the CROWN Act, protects against discrimination statewide by expanding the definition of discrimination based on race in the West Virginia Human Rights Act to include “hair textures and protective hairstyles historically associated with a particular race.”; and

Whereas, West Virginia Senate Bill 850 also states that “The term “protective hairstyles” includes, but is not limited to, hairstyles such as braids, locks, and twists.”

Therefore, be it proclaimed by the Student Assembly of West Virginia University:

Section 1: The West Virginia University Student Government Association urges the West Virginia State Senate to pass Senate Bill 850,

Section 2: The West Virginia University Student Government Association fully supports the enactment of the CROWN Act in West Virginia,

Section 3: Upon passage and approval, this legislation shall be forwarded to:

Mandates:

G. Corey Farris, Dean of Students
Dr. Thanh Le, Director, Student Engagement and Leadership (Advisor)
Kate Dye, Student Body President
Meshea L. Poore, Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
J. Spenser Darden, Director, Diversity Initiatives and Community Engagement
Marjorie Fuller, Director, Center for Black Culture and Research
Jerry Carr, President, Morgantown-Kingwood NAACP Branch #3241
Brianna Herscher, President, West Virginia University Collegiate Chapter of the NAACP #38AF
Mitch Carmichael, West Virginia State Senator, 4th District (Senate President)
Stephen Baldwin, West Virginia State Senator, 10th District
Robert D. Beach, West Virginia State Senator, 13th District
Charles H. Clements, West Virginia State Senator, 2nd District
Sue Cline, West Virginia State Senator, 9th District
Paul Hardesty, West Virginia State Senator, 9th District
Glenn D. Jeffries, West Virginia State Senator, 8th District
Richard D. Lindsay II, West Virginia State Senator, 8th District
Mark R. Maynard, West Virginia State Senator, 6th District
John R. Pitsenbarger, West Virginia State Senator, 11th District

Michael J. Romano, West Virginia State Senator, 12th District
Patricia Puertas Rucker, West Virginia State Senator, 16th District
Randy E. Smith, West Virginia State Senator, 14th District
Tom Takubo, West Virginia State Senator, 17th District
Ryan W. Weld, West Virginia State Senator, 1st District
Michael A. Woelfel, West Virginia State Senator, 5th District
Charles S. Trump IV, West Virginia State Senator, 15th District
Roger Hanshaw, West Virginia Delegate, 33rd District (Speaker of the House of Delegates)
Danielle Walker, West Virginia Delegate, 51st District
American Civil Liberties Union of West Virginia
Our Future West Virginia
Call to Action for Racial Equality (CARE) Coalition of West Virginia
Daily Athenaeum