



February 16, 2023

Adrienne Olejnik, Vice President
Kansas Action for Children
Written-only proponent testimony for HB 2044
House Committee on Federal and State Affairs

Chairman Carpenter and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of HB 2044, which would amend the Kansas Act Against Discrimination to include protections for the style and texture of natural hair. Kansas Action for Children is a nonprofit advocacy organization working to make Kansas a place where **every child** has the opportunity to grow up healthy and thrive. We work across the political spectrum to improve the lives of Kansas children through bipartisan advocacy, partnership, and information-sharing on key issues, including early learning and education, health, and economic security for families.

HB 2044 would implement provisions like those recommended in The CROWN Act model legislation, which was “created in 2019 by Dove and the CROWN Coalition to ensure protection against discrimination based on race-based hairstyles by extending statutory protection to hair texture and protective styles such as braids, locs, twists, and knots in the workplace and public schools.”

KAC supports policies that are inclusive and create a sense of belonging for everyone. Adding clarity to the Kansas Act Against Discrimination with these specified protections is a way to increase belonging and equity in schools, the workplace, and other community places. While this bill applies to all Kansans, it will be especially helpful to people of color. Enacting HB 2044 can strengthen their physical and emotional well-being, secure their safety and rights, and recognize their pride of culture and individuality.

We encourage you to listen closely to those affected by discrimination, as proponents continue to show up year after year to share their stories on this topic with legislative committees. We ask you to favorably move this bill out of your committee this year.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill, as it provides the clarity needed to update the Kansas Act Against Discrimination. It's the right step to improve equity in Kansas. If I can be of further assistance, please contact me at adrienne@kac.org.