

Good morning Senators Holland, Begich, Stevens, Hughes, and Micciche -

Thank you for hearing my story this morning. I wanted to send this follow up answering some of the questions and concerns that I heard.

Because of the audio issues, I unfortunately didn't hear everything and or who asked exactly what. But if any of you do have other questions, I'm happy to answer and share what I can.

I heard the tale-end question of what a protective style is. A protective style are styles and techniques that folks with 3 and 4 type hair (coily and kinky hair) do to protect the edges and ends of our strands from breakage, and retains moisture in our hair follicles and cuticles. These styles can be done with our without weave and extensions, and can include bonnets, du-rags, bandanas, wraps, and scarves for further protection. These styles are important as they are part of our hygienic routine for our bodies and hair, and keeps it healthy, **detangled**, and clean. They are especially important in Alaska with our low humidity, hard water, and lack to hair products and salons to receive deep conditioning and trimming. Pictures of protective styles are attached below.

I heard the question/concern about how to enforce this with employers, as someone could come up to them and say that their hairstyle is a natural or protective style. I think honestly you can enforce this the same way as state law protects race, gender, class, religion, etc. There are already protections for Jewish and Sikh people in schools and in the workplace when it comes to their hair, kappahs, and turbans. If there are already protections and accommodations for those ethno-religions, communities, and people in the schools and workplaces, I don't see a reason that this protection for Black hair is too legally suspect or invasive to do the same.

Additionally, there are clear definitions and examples of what a protective and natural hairstyle and texture is. As you all can see, it's obvious who these hairstyles are for - Black people. Black people have unique hair textures, which is why we are subject to discrimination. Hair is connected to a person's race and ethnicity as much as it is connected to their culture and religions, but our race and ethnicity serves as the foundations. There is a scientific, anthropological, hygienic, and cultural reason and necessary for these hairstyles. They can be traced back to our many empires and tribes in Africa and the West Indies. They hold both culture and medical significance to our communities. One who is not of those races and ethnicities cannot claim to have those racial and ethnic features; that including hairstyle. A non-Black person cannot, should not, and does not need to loc, braid, or twist their hair to keep it healthy. And in fact, for people with 1 and 2 type hair (straight or curly type hair), braiding, twisting, etc. is a choice - their hair is not going to tangle up, mat up, or break off if they **don't** plat, braid, loc, or twist their hair. **Our hair will** if we don't. That distinction is incredibly important to understand. Folks with 1 and 2 type hair that try to copy our hairstyles damage their scalps, have allergic reactions to our weaves and products, catch mold, and most have to shave their hair off because they've done too much damage to their hair. So someone with straight textured hair running to their employer, claiming that their attempt at box braids, or another hairstyle that does not have a clear ethnic, racial, and historic connection to them already, suddenly is a natural or protective hairstyle is highly unlikely, disrespectful, and honestly laughable. That is easy for the employer to spot and mitigate through.

The third concern I heard was about safety in a shop class, for example. The ability for Black students to style the hair in the ways that they need to poses no issue to safety in a classroom or job with chemicals, machinery, and fires. This is why safety equipment and wear, and protocols exists - hair ties and nets, helmets, goggles, etc. Black students and workers have never had an issue with

complying with those procedures and protocols. The issue lies with when those safety equipment doesn't fit our heads because they are not made with Black people in mind, so we have to improvise. The issue lies with the teacher, who bars their student with an afro from participating from activities, even when they tied back or covered their hair, because 'their hair will catch on fire' or 'the oils from your hair will contaminate the project' before the activity even starts. It lies with the employer who threatens their Black employees to chemically straighten their hair (which causes burns, hair loss, and with long term use - cancer) so they look "professional". Respectfully, if Black soldiers can go to war with long microbraids, then Black students can participate in shop class with any hairstyle they need and choose. The problem is not us or our hair. The problem is racism and microaggressions.

I think the biggest thing I want to leave this committee with is that this is about how I am allowed to exist. This is not about sneaking past health and safety codes, this is not about forcing employers to change their businesses or administrations. This is about protecting your constituents rights to exist, as they exist. I can not control the way my hair natural grows out of my head, I can only take care of it. I do not know why teachers, employers, and strangers seems to take issue with a part of my body that does not impact, endanger, or threaten them. Why then are they allowed to impact, endanger, and threaten me? Why is their personal discretions legally protected over my right to exist and take care of myself? This is the current condition in which we live, and is that something this legislature is willing to uphold - that someone's perspective of you matters more than you yourself? Is this legislature legally willing to defend and accept that reality, at your constituents expense? The purpose of this legislature is to ensure that Alaskans have the ability, access and safety to the resources and services they need to thrive and survive. Discriminating against me because you don't like or understand my hair is not a right anyone should have. I think it's very appropriate that on Elizabeth Peratrovich Day to share what she responded:

"I would not have expected that I, who am barely out of savagery, would have to remind gentlemen with 5,000 years of recorded civilization behind them of our Bill of Rights... Do we believe that the passage of this bill will eliminate discrimination? Well, have you eliminated larceny or murder by passing a law against it? No law will eliminate crime, but at least you as legislators can assert to the world that you recognize the evil of this present situation and speak your intent to help us overcome discrimination for all Alaskans."

I really encourage and think this is an excellent opportunity for you all to connect with your Black constituents and see if they will share their expenses with you. In terms of where to go for resources - Google, Youtube, and TikTok are actually *wonderful* resources to learn more about Black culture and Black hair, because the information is coming directly from Black people, and Black women have really led the way in making sure this information and traditions are shared in our communities so we can do our hair. I did share various studies, papers, and articles about this issue, so hopefully these links are helpful.

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/how-we-rise/2021/02/23/penalizing-black-hair-in-the-name-of-academic-success-is-undeniably-racist-unfounded-and-against-the-law/>

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/761464>

<https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/yorklr2&div=9&id=&page=>

<https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0760/7/11/219>

<https://www.glamour.com/story/army-updates-grooming-policy-to-address-lack-of-inclusion>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/10/us/army-ban-on-dreadlocks-black-servicewomen.html>

<https://www.adp.com/spark/articles/2021/11/legislative-trends-hairstyle-discrimination-in-the-workplace.aspx>

<https://www.cnbc.com/2021/11/29/why-ending-hair-discrimination-should-be-part-of-companies-dei-plans.html>

['Black Hair' is Never 'Just Hair': A Closer Look at Afro Discrimination in the Workplace | Law.com International](#)

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/25-year-long-study-of-black-women-links-frequent-use-of-lye-based-hair-relaxers-to-a-higher-risk-of-breast-cancer>

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0365059621003147>

This is an incredibly complex and nuanced issue, and I didn't even cover all the intersections of skill, time, and finances around Black hair. So I want to thank you all for your honesty - because this is how we learn and be good neighbors to each other. As mentioned, I'm happy to answer any other questions you all may have.

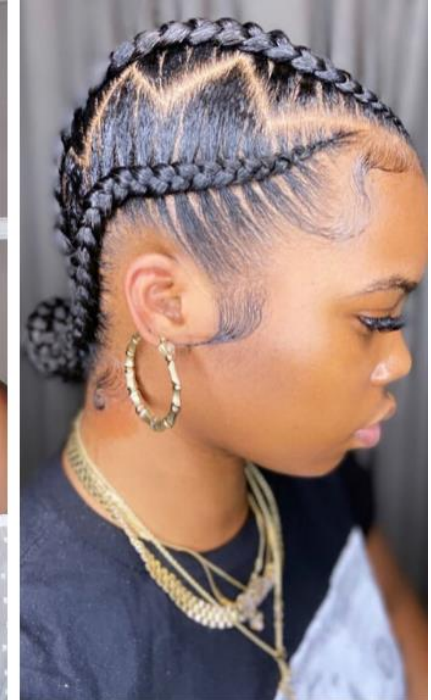
Thank you for reading this and your time to this issue,

~ Alyssa





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HEADWRAP

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