
From: Löki Gale Tobin [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, February 15, 2022 1:53 PM
To: Sen. David Wilson
Subject: Re: SB 174

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Good day Senator Wilson,

Thank you for introducing Senate Bill 174, a bill to allow for Natural Hair Styles in our public schools and workplaces.

As a young child, I struggled with my natural hair. As one of few Black mixed race kids in the schools I attended, my uniqueness often made me the subject of teasing and bullying for the protective hairstyles my mom would spend hours on were unfamiliar to those around me. It was after a particularly terrible year, my mom decided to start chemically straightening my hair in hopes I would be better protected from being singled out. In some way, I believe she hoped I would "pass" as not part Black.

For those who are unfamiliar with the practice, no-lye chemical relaxers are applied to a person's hair to strip the cuticle in order to relax the natural curl. This inherently weakens the hair, thus ensuring a person who starts relaxing must continue relaxing any new hair growth in perpetuity unless they wish for significant hair breakage. For many, chemical relaxers have been known to cause significant burning and scarring if not used correctly. In some horrific cases, a bad application of a chemical relaxer can cause a person to lose all their hair.

I continued relaxing my hair throughout high school and university, up until I left Alaska for my Peace Corps service in Azerbaijan. Prior to starting my service, I engaged in what is called, "the Big Chop," cutting off all chemically relaxed hair. Throughout my service, I wore my hair naturally and in protective styles - an experience that brought me great joy and confidence. Funnily enough, my most read blogs from that time were on how I cared for my natural hair.

Upon returning to Alaska, I experienced great fear. The teasing and bullying I experienced as a child caused me to rethink my approach to my personal appearance and I wondered if my newfound strength would last me through any potential negative attention. I shared my fears with my friends and family and was assured that society wise -things had changed while I was gone. I had my doubts but forged ahead.

Unfortunately, my fears were affirmed soon after my return to Alaska. I was asked by my employer to consider changing my hair as there was some concern my appearance was not "office appropriate." As I had student loan debt, rent, and now retirement to start funding, and I fully understood who had the power. I had little recourse other than to return to altering my natural hair to fit the expectations clearly outlined for me. Clearly, without significant augmentation, who I am and how I look naturally, was inappropriate for the office.

Many who know me ask why I did not speak up or speak out. It would not be until much later that I realized the power of my voice to bring attention to inequity and unfair practices in the places we call home. I am thankful that I am now in a place where I am supported and able to share my experience and my voice in support of policies that affirm everyone's right to be who they authentically are where they are.

Löki Gale Tobin, MA
(pronouns: she/her)

From: Milo Hou [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, February 18, 2022 12:12 PM
To: Sen. David Wilson; Jasmin Martin; David Song
Subject: Alaska's Natural Hair Bill

To the members of the Senate Education Committee,

I am writing today in support of SB 174/HB 312, Alaska's Natural Hair Bill.

This bill would allow students of color to wear their hair in natural and protective styles and prohibit schools and workplaces from implementing discriminatory policies that disproportionately affect Black and brown individuals.

Hairstyles such as afros, cornrows, locs, and twists are all hairstyles that have been historically considered "unprofessional," an arbitrary designation that is undeniably racist, as they are all hairstyles that reflect the natural hair texture and styles of our BIPOC community. Institutions and states across the country are instituting similar legislation, including the US Military, as they are recognizing the discriminatory and unnecessary nature of these policies.

Finally, there is a large body of evidence that hair relaxers and hair straightening products have a negative health impact and can cause significant damage to individuals who use them in order to comply with workplace hairstyle policies. This suffering can be reduced through the passage of this legislation, which targets these unfair policies.

Please pass SB 174 and HB 312 ASAP. This legislation is a no-brainer and will prevent any more harm from being created through racist policies.

From: Su Chon [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, February 18, 2022 1:34 PM
To: Jasmin Martin
Subject: Comment in support of SB 174

Dear Senator Wilson and Members of the Education Committee,

My name is Su Chon and I am a lifelong Alaskan. I believe that SB 174 is a seemingly small but significant change that will make Alaska a more equitable and welcoming place to all. I believe that people should be able to wear their hair in any way that fits their style, needs, and comfortability. While I understand that some organizations may desire a certain standard of "professionalism" in presentation, too often this standard has been used against black people as microaggressions and as a tool of racism. Professionalism today has progressed little from the professionalism that existed when blatant racism and xenophobia was acceptable. It's clear that America needs to reassess the standards of professionalism as it has been outdated for some time and has long been a disadvantage to non-white Americans. We can start with changing our corner of the world. Thank you Senator Wilson and Senator Gray-Jackson for leading this effort!

Sincerely,
Su Chon

From: Joyce Song [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, February 18, 2022 1:39 PM
To: David Song; Jasmin Martin; Sen. David Wilson
Subject: Alaska's Natural Hair Bill

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Sincerely,
Joyce Song

From: Beverly Jenkins [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, February 19, 2022 7:40 AM
To: Jasmin Martin
Subject: SB 174

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As an African American born with natural hair it is only fit that we shall wear our natural hair presented by the creator of all mankind without prejudice or discrimination practices. Everyone else wears their hair in its natural state, why should I be treated differently?

If my message is not clear then I will come right out to share that I am in support of this bill.

Hello,

I'm writing today in my personal capacity as a Fairbanks resident. I urge you to support SB 174, which would prevent school districts and employers from discriminating against Black and natural hairstyles in Alaska. It's appalling that Black Alaskans don't already have this basic legal protection. Nobody should be fired for how they look or how they wear their hair. I hope the Senate Education committee will move this bill quickly and that it will pass this legislative session.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Kasey Casort
Fairbanks, AK

From: Kay Smith [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, February 24, 2022 7:32 PM
To: Jasmin Martin
Subject: Support for SB 174

Good Morning Ms. Martin,

I'm writing in support of SB 174.

We, the members of a large BIPOC community here in Juneau, are thankful for you and Senator Wilson.

We are grateful for your dedicated work, support towards, sponsorship, and moving this Bill towards a successful outcome.

We wish you and Senator David Wilson all future success in your work as a whole.

With gratitude,

Kay Smith`

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