

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE GERAN TARR

Sponsor Statement

House Bill 312

“An act relating to dress codes and natural hairstyles.”

House Bill 312 prohibits schools and employers from adopting dress codes which disallow students or employees from wearing their hair in styles that are commonly associated with race, are a natural or protective style, or require a student to permanently or semi-permanently alter their natural hair.

No employee or student should be prohibited from participating in work or attending a public school because they will not alter their natural hair. People of color and ethnic descent are deprived of educational and work opportunities because they are adorned with natural or protective hairstyles. Workplace dress code and grooming policies that prohibit natural hair, including afros, braids, twists, and locks, have a disparate impact on people of color; these policies are more likely to burden or punish them. People of color, especially Black women, are targeted disproportionately by workplace and school dress codes.

People choose to wear their hair as they do for a variety of intertwined reasons, including cultural connectedness and tradition, protection of hair texture and growth, or simply preference. Whatever the reason, hairstyles have absolutely no correlation to professionalism or work performance.

House Bill 312 defines what standards are unacceptable for school districts and employers to place on hair. This legislation still allows for the restriction of hairstyles based on health and safety laws and regulation. Thank you for your consideration. I respectfully ask for your support of this legislation.