



DELTA SIGMA THETA SORORITY, INC.
A Service Sorority Founded in 1913

1707 New Hampshire Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20009

March 6, 2020

The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass
Chair of Health and Government Operations Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: HB 1444/CROWN Act – SUPPORT

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated is proud to support House Bill 1444 (Smith).

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. is a public service sorority and non-governmental organization, with more than 1000 chapters. Founded by 22 history-making, civically engaged, undergraduate women in 1913, on the campus of Howard University, it is the largest predominantly Black women's organization in the world.

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. is a leading purveyor of justice and opportunity, that is made up of members who are tireless racial and gender equity advocates, and we strongly support outlawing hair discrimination.

HB 1444 (Smith), the Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural hair (CROWN) Act, addresses an inconsistency in existing anti-discrimination laws by amending the applicable Maryland Government Code to protect against discrimination based on traits historically associated with race, such as hair texture and protective hairstyles.

Despite efforts made by citizens, legislators, and courts to tackle the long-lasting damaging effects of racism, hair remains a source of racial discrimination with serious economic and health consequences, particularly for Black women, children, and men. This type of discrimination is encouraged by purportedly "race neutral" grooming and dress code policies in the workplace that enforce Eurocentric standards of professional hair. Enforcing an image of professionalism that was created with European features as the norm disproportionately impacts individuals who do not naturally fall into that norm. Black women, adhering to such grooming policies, must often employ harmful styling practices like time consuming heat straightening, or chemical relaxers, both of which can lead to hair damage and hair loss. Therefore, braids, locs, and twists, also known as "protective hairstyles," can be necessary for healthy Black hair maintenance.

We believe expanding the current protections under the classification of race to include hair texture and protective hairstyles is critically important, as it will make it illegal for employers and public/public charter schools to discriminate against the protected employee's, applicant's, or student's hairstyle. As a sorority that prides itself on engaging in meaningful social action, we are proud to support HB 1444 (Smith), and respectfully request your aye vote on this measure.

Sincerely,

Beverly E. Smith,
President and CEO
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated

Cc: Honorable Stephanie Smith
Honorable Members, Health and Government Operations Committee
CROWN Coalition Impact Strategist, Adjoa B. Asamoah