

## **Natural Hair Bill Testimony – Senate Bill 531 - Discrimination - Definition of Race - Hair Texture and Hairstyles**

**Susan L Peterkin**

**Mom – to Oronde & Iyanu Bishop**

**Grandmother – to Chloe & Aiden Bishop**

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**Certified Hair Loss Specialist – PeterKindred Hair & Scalp Wellness Center**

**Educator – Montgomery College, Montgomery County Correctional Facility**

**Community Organizer – Discover Bonifant, Downtown Silver Spring**

**The Natural hair Industry Convention – Co-Founder**

I have experienced hair discrimination in several aspects of my life and career. I have deliberately had to teach my daughter that while her does not define who she is, it's also her choice as black girl, a human being.

As a Mom:

- My son at 3 years old(now a 20 year old young man) came home from pre-school to tell me the teacher's aid said his hair was dirty and that I should wash it properly. My son at the time had an afro, he had never gotten a haircut at that point in his life. I don't believe she meant any harm, so I went to the school to have a conversation with the director. I decided that this was a teachable moment. (2003/2004)
  - o She did not understand that a curly/kinky afro was not dirty just because it did not fit the common standard look of a "neatly" cut and smooth hair.
  - o Kinky coily hair is not naturally shine, which gives it a more matte look
  - o It has texture to the touch, it is not smooth
  - o All the above means that kinky coily hair is healthy

As a Salon Owner:

- A 14-year-old female was told she would have to cut her midback length locs she has been growing since she was 7 years to be admitted in a prominent dance school in the area. (early 2000's)
- Female clients requesting hairstyles that are "smooth" as not to be distracting or to bring attention to themselves at work. (1996 to present)
- When we as women of color consistently straighten our curls whether by chemicals or direct heat, we break the natural bonds that keeps our hair naturally healthy.
- This leads to hair breakage and in may cases permanent hair loss.

As a Certified Hair Loss Specialist:

- I see every day firsthand how hair and scalp health are compromised to meet a standard that has been set by society.
- I see the negative effects that certain hair styling choices have caused to the hair and scalp.
- In many cases hair loss is the result of certain hairstyles worn by Black women to meet standards set.

This Natural Hair Senate Bill 531 would be a beginning:

- Hold the ones accountable who are deliberately mean and maliciously, discriminating against a certain race because of their hair and chosen styling preferences.
- Create an atmosphere of respect and appreciation for the differences in culture.
- There must be a conversation around the various ways we can create educational opportunities for those who don't know better, so they can understand and do better.

This law will enforce what should be a human right! People with kinky/coily natural hair with or without extensions are human beings who chose to embrace their natural hair, the way they were born.