



## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 531

### Discrimination- Definition of Race-Hair Texture and Hairstyles

*Judicial Proceedings*

*February 18, 2020*

*Submitted by Stacey Jefferson and Margo Quinlan, Co-Chairs*

#### **Member Agencies:**

Advocates for Children and Youth  
Baltimore Jewish Council  
Behavioral Health System Baltimore  
CASH Campaign of Maryland  
Catholic Charities  
Episcopal Diocese of Maryland  
Family League of Baltimore  
Fuel Fund of Maryland  
Health Care for the Homeless  
Homeless Persons  
Representation Project  
Job Opportunities Task Force  
League of Women Voters of Maryland  
Loyola University Maryland  
Maryland Catholic Conference  
Maryland Center on Economic Policy  
Maryland Community Action  
Partnership  
Maryland Family Network  
Maryland Hunger Solutions  
Paul's Place  
Public Justice Center  
St. Vincent de Paul of Baltimore  
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**Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) supports Senate Bill 531 because hair discrimination based on texture and style directly affects African Americans who are judged based on their physical appearance, their culture, or religious beliefs.** African American women, men, and children have been denied employment, education, and housing opportunities solely based on their hair styles and/or textures. SB 531 changes the definition of race in the state to include traits historically associated with African Americans including hair texture, afro hairstyles and protective hairstyles

**A person's hair should not prevent them from being employed or having access to quality education.** Currently in the state of Maryland 13.6% of Black or African Americans live below the poverty line. In comparison the total rate of poverty in Maryland is 9.6%. <sup>1</sup>MAP continues to support legislation that address the inequities that cause poverty in our state. Hair discrimination is just one of many unnecessary barriers to education and employment opportunities for African Americans that in turn lead to higher rates of poverty and unemployment.

In 2019 the CROWN Coalition along with DOVE published a groundbreaking study that confirmed that workplace bias and corporate grooming policies unfairly impact Black women. The study found that Black women are 1.5 times more likely to be sent home from the workplace because of their hair. They also found that hairstyles such as locs, braids, etc. were ranked the lowest for 'job readiness'. <sup>2</sup> This study along with countless stories has helped to lead a national movement to end hair discrimination.

**Across the nation, legislation banning hair discrimination is creating change.** California and New York were the first states to enact laws this past summer which prohibited race-based hair discrimination.<sup>3</sup> This bill will allow Maryland to join the national movement to end hair discrimination policies and protect African Americans who express their culture and or religious beliefs through their hair texture and hairstyles.

**MAP appreciates your consideration, and urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 531**

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***Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) is a coalition of service providers, faith communities, and advocacy organizations advancing statewide public policies and programs necessary to alleviate the burdens faced by Marylanders living in or near poverty, and to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty.***

<sup>1</sup> [http://mapadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Maryland-Poverty-Profiles\\_2020-FINAL.pdf](http://mapadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Maryland-Poverty-Profiles_2020-FINAL.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.thecrownact.com/research>

<sup>3</sup> Nicquel terry Ellis, and Charisse Jones USA TODAY Oct 14, 2019 "Banning Ethnic hairstyles upholds this notion of white supremacy. States pass laws to stop natural hair discrimination."

