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February 9, 2021

Senator Matt Hansen, Chair  
and Members of the Business and Labor Committee  
State Capitol, Lincoln NE

RE: LB 451 (McKinney) Include characteristics associated with race, culture, and personhood within definition of race, including hair texture and protective hairstyles under the Nebraska Fair Employment Practice Act

## **Support**

Dear Senator Hansen and Members of the Business and Labor Committee:

The League of Women Voters of Nebraska supports LB 451 as an effort to bring laws into compliance with the goals of the Equal Rights Amendment which supports equal rights for all under state and federal law regardless of race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation or disability. In the case of this bill, LWWNE believes that it addresses discrimination against individuals, primarily women and people of color and some with certain religious affiliations. It addresses the practice of hairstyle discrimination in the workplace, a situation that affects the ability to provide for one's self and one's family.

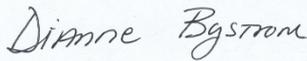
For many years, Black women and even Black men, have had to conform to white standards of hairstyle and texture at work. If they refused or objected to modifying their hair style to an "acceptable" Caucasian style, their continued employment, possibly advancement could be threatened. If they complied, they would be forced to expend both extra time and money to achieve a hairstyle deemed acceptable. These issues could also apply to Muslims, Orthodox Jews, and Native Americans, but overall, the burden of this discrimination falls on Black women.

In September, 2020, the House of Representatives passed the "Crown Act" --*Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair Act of 2019*-- the legislation would prevent employers from denying economic opportunities to individuals with diverse hair textures or race-specific hairstyles. The act has been passed in seven states, including California,

New York, Washington, Colorado, Virginia and Maryland. Twenty-two additional states are considering enacting their own version of the CROWN Act.

It is time to end all discriminatory practices that create barriers to employment for women, people of color and those with religious practices relative to hairstyle and dress. This bill helps to ferret out such practice and allows for employers to address ways to comply with health and safety regarding hairstyles. LWVNE sees this bill as a means to stop this brand of gender, racial, and religious discrimination.

Sincerely,  
Carol Dennison  
Director, Social Policy  
League of Women Voters of Nebraska



Dianne Bystrom  
Co-President



Linda Duckworth  
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