



*End discrimination based on  
sexual orientation and  
gender identity*

Proponent Statement of Thomas Witt  
Oral In-Person Testimony  
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SB 130, Crown Act  
Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs

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Greetings Chairman Olson and members of the committee –

Equality Kansas is the leading LGBT advocacy organization in our state. We have had a full time presence in the statehouse since 2006, and in that time one of our main priorities has been protecting the LGBT community from discriminatory legislation, and the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity in Kansas statutes prohibiting discriminatory practices.

The Kansas Act Against Discrimination (KAAD) currently protects Kansans from discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodations based on race, religion, color, sex, disability, familial status, national origin, or ancestry. The KAAD was originally established in 1953, and has been amended at least nine times since. Kansas has continued to amend the KAAD as the need has been shown to protect the fundamental rights of employment, housing, and public accommodations for individuals who have been – and still are - targets of discrimination.

Sadly, racial and ethnic minorities still face discrimination because of their natural hairstyles. I think we've all seen news reports of children having their heads forcibly shaved, their hair forcibly cut, by teachers, coaches, and others who have absolutely no right to touch these kids. Reports of people being denied employment, or getting fired, because of their natural hairstyle are not uncommon. Frankly, denying someone employment, housing, or public accommodation because of the way their hair naturally grows is little more than a proxy for racial discrimination. Telling minority kids they can't participate in a school activity unless they take drastic measures to alter their hairstyle to meet the majority's perception of how they should appear is downright appalling.

The committee will recall that I testified on February 21<sup>st</sup> on SB 482, the so-called "Firearms Industry Non-Discrimination Act." In that previous testimony, I pointed out that never in the nearly 70 year history of the KAAD had that act been amended to protect an industry, particularly one as profitable as the gun industry.

Unlike SB 482, we support today's bill because it does what the Kansas Act Against Discrimination is designed to do: It creates protections for individuals whose innate characteristics make them targets for discrimination.

Equality Kansas absolutely supports this bill and other, similar bills. Protecting individuals within minority, marginalized, and disfavored populations from discrimination is one of our top legislative priorities. This bill should have been passed the first year it was introduced in this building. We urge this committee to immediately pass this bill favorably for consideration by the full Senate. There is absolutely no reason to wait.

Thank you for your time and attention. I am available to stand for questions.