

**Lisa Cataldi**

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**From:** Erinn <erinnroberts@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 8, 2025 12:54 PM  
**To:** House Education Committee  
**Cc:** Rep. Dawson, Matthew S.  
**Subject:** Support H5841

To the members of the House Education Committee,

I am a resident in Riverside with a child in an East Providence public elementary school. I'm writing to express my support for H5841, an act to amend Section 16-38-1 of the General Laws in Chapter 16-38 entitled "Offenses Pertaining to Schools [See Title 16 Chapter 97 — The Rhode Island Board of Education Act], also known as The Crown Act. This act allows for broadened definition of race to include "traits historically associated with race" and includes protective hairstyles as an example of this. It is well documented that natural hair remains one of the ways that race-based discrimination continues in our country, including in our schools with both students and faculty. The mission statement on the home page of the Dept of Education states:

"The Rhode Island Department of Education is committed to ensuring equity in education and creating conditions for every student to think critically and collaboratively and act as creative, self-motivated, culturally and globally competent learners."

Section 16-2-9(a)(24) of the Guidelines for School Committees states that one of the functions of the school committees is to address the health and wellness of students and employees.

This act is one of the ways that the RI government can legally support our schools in achieving this mission and policy around equity and wellness. We want to teach our children to bring their full selves to school everyday, to not be singled out, diminished and othered because of a natural expression of their true selves. I want the staff at my child's school to feel the same about themselves, and to know that they have the support of the law when and if they do experience discrimination.

From what I can see, Rhode Island is the only state in New England that has not yet passed a Crown Act. Please make 2025 the year that this finally passes in our state.

Sincerely,  
Erinn Roberts