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Statement of Gloria Allred

Today we are here to announce a major victory for women's rights and to describe how we achieved the change that we were determined to win.

Earlier this year, I was contacted by and met with Veronika Didusenko, Miss Ukraine 2018. She brought to my attention the issue of discrimination against women in the Miss Universe and Miss World beauty pageants. At that time, the eligibility language for the Miss California contestants stated: "Must . . . never have given birth to a child, cannot be pregnant or be a parent." Similarly, Miss USA's application process stated: "Here are some final questions to ask yourself. . . Have I ever given birth to a child? Am I the legal parent or guardian of anyone? Am I currently pregnant? If you answered no to all of those questions, congrats you're eligible!"

After that meeting I was contacted by Andrea Quiroga who wanted to apply to both pageants but was not eligible because she has a son. Andrea retained me to represent her on this issue.

On March 9, 2022, Veronika, Andrea and I held a press conference in which we challenged the discriminatory language for eligibility.

I commented at that time that I believed that the language clearly violated California's Unruh Civil Rights Act and that on behalf of Andrea, I would be asking the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH) to open a complaint and investigate with the goal of eliminating this discriminatory practice.

I am happy to report that the DFEH did decide to file a complaint and opened an investigation.

Today we are happy to report that it appears that the Miss Universe beauty pageant, which encompasses the Miss California and Miss USA pageants, has eliminated the discriminatory eligibility requirement of which we complained.

Now as a result of our efforts, Miss USA has completely removed this rule from their list of entry requirements. Miss California's website now states "May be married, have been married, and have had a marriage annulled. May have given birth to a child, may be pregnant, or be a parent."

This is a major victory for all women who may wish to be eligible for these pageants but who would have been ineligible because of the previous rule. We fought for the elimination of the previous rule which discriminated against many women on its face, and we won a victory not only for women in the United States, but also in many other countries, as well.

This sexist rule which has been in effect since the 1950s is now herstory!

As I have said many times, being pregnant or giving birth or being a parent is not a crime or a communicable disease and should not be a basis for excluding a woman from an employment or business opportunity. Even if she is a Miss or a Ms., has been divorced or never married, she should not be excluded because of her marital status or status as a parent.

I am proud to know and work with Veronika who has been a courageous advocate on these issues for many years. In addition, Andrea, whom I represent on this case in California, has now made a significant difference for so many other women because she decided to stand up and fight back to eliminate the discriminatory language which has had such an adverse impact on the opportunities for women for many years. We are still investigating the pageants

for other discriminatory policies, and we will announce in the future what other steps we may take to eliminate any other type of discrimination that may exist.

For now, however, we are thrilled with this positive outcome which we have won for women all over the world.

Gloria Allred
Attorney at Law
August 11, 2022

DFEH case #: 202203-16331308 Quiroga / Miss World America, LLC
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Entertainment, LLC et al