



THE CASE FOR INCLUSION

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Mass. CROWN Act Provides Anti-Discrimination Protections Based on Natural and Protective Hairstyles

BY DANIELLE JUREMA LEDERMAN • JULY 29, 2022

On Tuesday, July 26th, Massachusetts took another significant step towards building an inclusive society when Governor Baker signed the Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair Act (the “CROWN Act”) into law. The CROWN Act explicitly provides anti-discrimination protections for individuals based on their natural and protective hairstyles, which is defined as hair texture, hair type and hairstyles, and specifically includes, but is not limited to, braids, locks, twists, and Bantu knots.

The CROWN Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of natural and protective hairstyles in schools, workplaces, housing, and public accommodations. Massachusetts joins California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Tennessee, Virginia, and Washington in banning discrimination based on hair texture and style.

With the passage of the CROWN Act, the list of protected characteristics under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 151B, among others, is further expanded and now provides anti-discrimination and anti-retaliation protections based upon:

- Race
- Color
- Natural and Protective Hairstyles
- Religious Creed
- National Origin
- Ancestry

- Sex
- Sexual Orientation
- Gender Identity or Expression
- Pregnancy or Pregnancy-Related Conditions
- Age
- Military or Veteran Status
- Physical or Mental Disability
- Genetic Information

To ensure compliance with the CROWN Act, covered entities should plan to update their policies and practices, as applicable, including revisions to anti-discrimination, grooming, dress code, appearance and equal opportunity policies. Additionally, organizations will want to ensure that their managers, supervisors, and school staff are trained on their obligations under the CROWN Act to avoid engaging in discriminatory practices based on an individual's hair texture or style. Please contact your Bowditch attorney with questions or [read our alert for more information](#).

For further background and history on the passage of the Crown Act, please see [The Boston Globe article](#) "Massachusetts is 18th state to ban discrimination based on one's natural hairstyles."