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CONTACT

GovernorsOffice@illinois.gov

Governor Pritzker Signs CROWN Act Into Law Protecting Against Hair Discrimination

Act amends Illinois Human Rights Act to include hair-based discrimination under anti-racism protections

Chicago—Governor Pritzker signed the CROWN Act into law today, codifying protections for Illinoisans discriminated against due to hairstyles historically associated with specific racial groups. The act, which stands for Create a Respectful and Open Workplace for Natural Hair, categorizes traits such as hair texture or protective styling as race-based and therefore protected under bans against racial discrimination.

“No Illinoisan should face discrimination based off the way they style their hair. Not in schools. Not in the workplace. Not anywhere,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “Hair isn’t just deeply personal—it’s inherently cultural, passing down thousands of years of history from generation to generation. Hair discrimination isn’t just a microaggression—it’s racist. And it’s past time we prohibit it. I am proud to sign the CROWN Act into state law, protecting our Black residents’ right to style their hair however they choose.”

In 2021, Governor Pritzker signed the Jett Hawkins Act, introduced by Senator Mike Simmons, which banned hairstyle discrimination in Illinois schools. The CROWN Act, introduced by Senator Mattie Hunter, expands these protections to other covered situations under the Illinois Human Rights Act, including employment, housing, financial transactions, and public accommodations. Illinois is one of only a handful of states to pass the CROWN Act, a national version of which passed the U.S. House of Representatives but has failed to advance in the U.S. Senate.

The bill expands and clarifies the definition of race to include traits commonly associated with a race, including but not limited to these hairstyles and textures.

In the past, negative perceptions of hairstyles such as dreadlocks, twists, and braids that were traditionally worn by the African American community resulted in unjust discrimination across industries. These hairstyles have a rich historical significance in the Black community and often serve as a way of protecting or comfortably tying back hair.

“Black hair is beautiful, in or out of the workplace, and no one should be allowed to weaponize hairstyles to demean or discriminate,” **said Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton**. “I’m so proud that Illinois is taking a stand against unfair policies and embracing the beauty of diversity. By passing the Crown Act, we are making it clear that we are committed to protecting the right to live and present as your authentic self freely and without prejudice.”

“The implementation of the CROWN Act has been a long time coming, and I am confident that this legislation will protect Black people from petty discrimination because of their hair,” **said Majority Caucus Chair Mattie Hunter (D-Chicago)**. “This law will ensure that those who wear their hair natural or in locs will be empowered, and not to be judged by the way they wear their hair, but the content of their character.”

“The signing of the Illinois CROWN act ensures Illinois continues to respect and elevate black people regardless of how they want to wear their hair,” **State Senator Mike Simmons (D-Chicago) said**. “Similar to the Jett Hawkins Act we passed last year which outlaws discrimination against black hair in all schools, this act protects black people who wear their hair how they want in workplaces. This law creates a more respectful, expressive and open workplace.”

“For far too long, individuals – particularly in the Black community – have been targeted and discriminated against for having their hair in dreadlocks or other protective styles,” **Representative Jehan Gordon-Booth (D-Peoria) said**. “Today, Illinois is choosing to be a leader in stopping this prejudice behavior and ensuring that workers can no longer be discriminated against for hair traits historically associated with race.”

Studies have found that Black women are 1.5 times more likely than their counterparts to be sent home from work because of their hairstyle and are 80% more likely to change their natural hair texture or style to conform to expectations at work. The American Bar Association reports children as young as six facing disciplinary action for their hairstyles. Jett Hawkins, the namesake of Illinois’s original bill protecting against discrimination in schools, was only four years old when his school cited him for being out of dress code for having his hair in braids.

This law goes into effect on January 1, 2023.