

# Workforce Bulletin

Insights on Labor and Employment Law

## Connecticut Bans Discrimination Based on Natural Hair

By Peter M. Stein & Carol J. Faherty on March 25, 2021



On March 4, 2021, Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont signed House Bill 6515, an “Act Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair,” also known as the CROWN Act (the “Act”). This legislation bans natural hair discrimination in the workplace by amending Connecticut’s anti-discrimination statute to define “race” as being “inclusive of ethnic traits historically associated with race, including, but not limited to, hair texture and protective hairstyles.” (Conn. Gen. Stat. 46a-51(23)-(24)). “Protective hairstyles” is defined to

include, but not be limited to, “wigs, headwraps and hairstyles such as individual braids, cornrows, locs, twists, Bantu knots, afros and afro puffs.”

Connecticut joins several other states, including California, Colorado, Maryland, New York, New Jersey, Virginia and Washington, as well a number of cities and counties, in passing similar CROWN Acts. A number of other states are in the process of enacting similar legislation. The U.S. House of Representatives passed a federal version of the CROWN Act in September 2020, and it is awaiting a potential vote in the Senate.

Employers should review their policies, particularly their grooming and appearance policies, to ensure they comply with the Act. Employers should also consider training their human resources and employee relations staff, as well as hiring managers and supervisors, on this issue. Finally, note that the term “ethnic traits historically associated with race” is not limited to just hair texture and protective hairstyles. Therefore, this law may be interpreted more broadly over time.

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