

New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy Signs into Law Bill Banning Hair Discrimination

New Jersey becomes the third state to pass the CROWN Act, which bans discrimination based on hair texture, hair type, and protective hairstyles

December 20, 2019

On December 19, 2019, about a year after a [nationally reported incident](#) in which New Jersey high school referee Alan Maloney forced a black wrestler to either have his dreadlocks cut or forfeit a match, Governor Phil Murphy signed into law the Create a Respectful and Open Workspace for Natural Hair Act (the “CROWN Act”). New Jersey is now the third state, following California and New York, to pass the CROWN Act.

The [CROWN Act](#), which passed both the Assembly and the Senate with overwhelming bipartisan support, amends the Law Against Discrimination by defining “race” as “inclusive of traits historically associated with race, including, but not limited to, hair texture, hair type, and protective hairstyles.” The CROWN Act defines “protective hair styles” to include “hairstyles [such] as braids, locks, and twists.”

The CROWN Act is supported by the [CROWN Coalition](#), a group of public interest organizations and corporations dedicated to the advancement of anti-discrimination legislation across the United States. Currently, twelve additional states are considering passing the CROWN Act, including Michigan, Tennessee, Wisconsin, Kentucky, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Maryland, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, and Virginia. In addition, Senator Cory Booker (NJ) and Congressman Cedric Richmond (LA) [introduced the CROWN Act](#) in both chambers of the U.S. Congress on December 5, 2019.

As more states consider passing the CROWN Act, employers should closely monitor new developments in the area of discrimination based on hair. Employers must ensure that their grooming and appearance policies are compliant with this new legislation and that they are keeping managerial staff informed to avoid potential liability based on conduct that may be perceived as discriminatory involving hair or hairstyle.

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If you have any questions concerning the CROWN Act, or any other federal or state employment laws, please feel free to contact [Jennine DiSomma](#) or [Vincent C. Cirilli](#) of Saiber LLC’s Employment and Labor Law practice.