



PRESS RELEASE

OREGON HOUSE DEMOCRATS

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House Democrats Pass Legislation Banning Race-Based Hairstyle Discrimination

House Bill 2935 A protects people from discrimination by including physical characteristics—including hair type, texture and style—within the definition of race in school discrimination practices.

SALEM, OR—Today House Democrats passed [House Bill 2935 A](#), which will protect students and employees from discrimination based on their hair type, texture and style.

The bill is based off the [Create a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair \(CROWN\) Act](#), a law that “prohibits race-based hair discrimination, which is the denial of employment and educational opportunities because of hair texture or protective hairstyles including braids, locs, twists or bantu knots.” First enacted in California in 2019, the act has been adopted by New York, New Jersey, the City of Cincinnati, and Montgomery County, Maryland, and is now [being considered across the country](#).

The bill is imperative to protecting Black communities, who disproportionately face discrimination based on hair styles and textures. In 2020, a [study](#) from Duke University found that “Black women with natural hairstyles, including Afros or braids, are often perceived as less professional than Black women with straightened hair, especially in certain industries.”

“We have to question: Who determines what is and what is not ‘professional’ or ‘acceptable’ hair?” said [Rep. Janelle Bynum](#), chief sponsor of the bill. “Hair discrimination is steeped in racism and negatively impacts Black Americans simply trying to go about their day. Anti-Black hair sentiment has no place anywhere and today we draw that line in the state of Oregon.”

Hair has long been a [form of empowerment and resistance](#) in the Black community. In the 1960s and ‘70s, the “Black is Beautiful” movement aimed to confront the societal pressures to emulate white American beauty standards. The movement helped empower Black communities to wear their hair naturally and to prioritize “emotional and psychological wellbeing” ([National Museum of African American History and Culture](#)).

The bill also allows students to wear religious clothing in accordance with the student’s sincerely held religious belief and consistent with any safety and health requirements. Furthermore, the bill will help to balance the health, safety and reasonable accommodations needed by participants on an activity-by-activity basis.

Oregon currently prohibits school and workplace discrimination based on race, but the applicable definitions do not explicitly include hair type, texture, or style. House Bill 2935, if passed in the Senate, would change that.

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