

# Engage PEO Client Alert: Massachusetts CROWN Act Prohibits Race-Based Hair Discrimination in Employment and Educational Opportunities

**WHAT'S NEW:** On July 26, 2022, Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker signed the CROWN Act into law to take effect immediately.

**WHY IT MATTERS:** The CROWN Act, which stands for “Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair,” prohibits discrimination in employment and educational opportunities on the basis of a person’s “natural or protective hairstyles.” The law specifically protects “hair texture, hair type and hairstyles, which shall include, but not be limited to, natural and protective hairstyles such as braids, locks, twists, Bantu knots, hair coverings, and other formations.” The term “natural or protective hairstyles” is broadly defined and intended to protect a variety of hairstyles.

**WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD DO:** Employers should consider reviewing their policies, practices, and dress codes or grooming policies for compliance with the CROWN Act and be prepared to incorporate the CROWN Act’s protections into their discrimination policies.

As an example, an employer’s discrimination policy can contain the following language as a means of integrating the Act: “The following protected class(es) is/are considered integrated, to the extent they are not already listed, into the Equal Employment Opportunity Policy of the handbook: hairstyle, which is defined as any characteristic, texture, form, or manner of wearing an individual’s hair if such characteristic, texture, form or manner is commonly associated with a particular race, national origin, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, or religion.”

Please reach out to your Engage Human Resources Consultant if you have any questions concerning this alert or other H.R.-related matters.