



AGENDA REPORT

City Council

DATE:	November 19, 2024
TO:	Mayor Martinez and Members of the City Council
FROM:	Council Member Cesar Zepeda
Subject:	The CROWN (Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair) Act
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	City staff time to update employee policies and procedures that regulate workplace appearance to include and not prohibit protected hairstyles provided in the CROWN Act. City staff time to provide discrimination and harassment training to all employees, that includes information about the CROWN Act.
PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION:	Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) and Race Forward
STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE:	The CROWN Act resolution works to ensure protection against discrimination based on race-based hairstyles by extending statutory protection to hair textures and protective styles such as braids, locs, twists, and Bantu knots in the workplace and public schools.
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	DIRECT staff to review and ensure all City policies governing appearance align with the City's anti-harassment policy's definition of Race and DIRECT staff to include as part of the Race Equity Initiative, educating the workforce about the CROWN Act - Council Member Zepeda 510- 620-6593.

DISCUSSION:

The history of our nation is riddled with laws and societal norms that equate “blackness,” and the associated physical traits, for example, dark skin, kinky, and curly hair to a badge of inferiority, and subject to separate and unequal treatment.

This idea has permeated societal understanding of professionalism was, and still is, closely linked to European features and mannerisms. Those who do not naturally fall into Eurocentric norms must alter their appearances, sometimes drastically and permanently, to be deemed professional.

In 2019 the Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair (CROWN) Coalition and Dove, in partnership with then State Senator Holly J. Mitchell of California, created the CROWN ACT to ensure protection against discrimination based on race-based hairstyles by extending statutory protection to hair texture and protective styles such as braids, locs, twists, and Bantu knots in the workplace and public schools.

Although the federal courts accept that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on race, and therefore protects against discrimination against afros, the Courts do not understand that afros are not the only natural presentation of Black hair. Black hair can also be naturally various lengths, curl/coil patterns, textures and may be presented in braids, twists, locs and other protective and cultural hairstyles that include hairstyles such as cornrows, Bantu knots, and various types of treatments are used to create and/or to maintain the hair.

Research studies reveal that racial discrimination based on hairstyles can start as early as five years old with impacts that can last a lifetime. Race-based hair discrimination remains a systemic problem in the workplace – from hiring practices to daily workplace interactions that disproportionately impact Black women’s employment opportunities and professional advancement with serious economic and health consequences.

Workplace dress code and grooming policies that prohibit natural hair, including afros, braids, twists, and locs, have a disparate impact on Black individuals as these policies are more likely to deter Black applicants and burden or punish Black employees than any other group.

Black women with coily and textured hair are two times as likely to experience microaggressions in the workplace than Black women with straighter hair and two and a half times more likely to be perceived as unprofessional. Black women under age 34 feel

pressured to have a headshot with straight hair and approximately 66 percent of Black women change their hair for a job interview.

Among them, 41 percent changed their hair from curly to straight and 54 percent are more likely to feel like they have to wear their hair straight to a job interview to be successful. Over 20 percent of Black women 25-34 have been sent home from work because of their hair. 25 percent of Black women believe they have been denied a job interview because of their hair, which is even higher for women under 34.

The CROWN Act prohibits race-based hair discrimination and updating employee policies and procedures is critical to further bolster acceptance of hair diversity and to break away from European norms and features.

DOCUMENTS ATTACHED:

Attachment 1 – Resolution