

PROTECTING PROTECTIVE HAIRSTYLES: KANSAS CITY'S CROWN ACT TAKES EFFECT

Kansas City, Missouri, is the latest jurisdiction to implement a “Crown Act” ordinance, prohibiting discrimination based on natural hair types and hairstyles commonly associated with race and racial identity. [Ordinance 200837](#), known as the “Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair (CROWN) Act” took effect on Nov. 1, 2020. The ordinance modifies the definition of race to include “traits historically associated with race.” Such traits include but are not limited to braids, locks and twists, afros and hair texture. The ordinance prohibits discrimination in employment, housing, brokerage services, commercial real estate loans, public accommodations, and other related contexts. As a result, businesses and employers in Kansas City, Missouri, which maintain appearance policies should carefully review any restrictions or other consequences placed on hairstyle and work with counsel to ensure compliance with the new ordinance.

Businesses and employers operating in other jurisdictions should also be mindful of state and federal initiatives to implement similar laws across the country. For instance, a similar Crown Act law was introduced in Missouri’s neighboring state of Kansas ([Senate Bill 250](#)) this year to prohibit discrimination based on the wearing of protective hairstyles, though it failed to pass. Efforts are underway on the national level as well with House Bill [5309](#), a federal Crown Act law. If passed, the law will prohibit discrimination based on natural hairstyles or hair textures in employment, education, public accommodations and housing. The bill passed the U.S. House of Representatives on Sept. 21, 2020, and is now with the Senate.

Armstrong Teasdale will continue to monitor any developments with respect to the CROWN Act and related enforcement action. [Sign up or update your email preferences](#) to receive legal and event information from Armstrong Teasdale related to this and other timely topics.

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