

LEGAL ALERT

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CUYAHOGA COUNTY BANS DISCRIMINATION BASED ON HAIR STYLE AND TEXTURE

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On October 14, 2024, Cuyahoga County Council voted to pass the Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair (“CROWN”) Act. This new ordinance bans discrimination based on hair texture and style, if such hair texture or style is “commonly associated with a particular race or national origin.” The ordinance lists hair that is tightly coiled or tightly curled, braids, locs, twists, cornrows, Bantu knots and Afros as examples of protected hair textures or styles. The ordinance classifies hair-based discrimination as a form of race or national origin discrimination.

The new ordinance applies countywide, including county employees and workplaces. Any complaints of violations of the ordinance will be handled by the Cuyahoga County Human Rights Commission, which has the authority to investigate, mediate disputes, hold hearings, and impose civil penalties if violations are found.

Employers are still permitted to enforce health and safety policies under the ordinance, provided they do so “equally” and without discriminatory intent.

Cuyahoga County’s CROWN Act takes effect on November 13, 2025.

Employers going forward should consider:

- (1) reviewing and revising any hair- or appearance- related policies to ensure they are not discriminatory towards hair texture or style;
- (2) update staff and management training to educate them on recognition and preventative measures regarding hair-based discrimination in hiring, promotion, and workplace conduct;
- (3) ensure there are proper reporting channels for employees to report any potential violations or complaints regarding hair-based discrimination.

In passing this ordinance, Cuyahoga County became the first county in Ohio to join the growing nationwide movement in support of similar legislation. Ohio has not implemented a state-wide ban on discrimination based on hair style or texture, but other states and cities have.

For more information or assistance in updating policies or procedures with respect to hair-based discrimination protections, please contact a member of [Hah Loeser's Labor and Employment Group](#).

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