

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2116

To prohibit discrimination based on an individual's texture or style of hair.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 19, 2021

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN (for herself, Ms. LEE of California, Ms. PRESSLEY, Ms. OMAR, Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin, Mrs. BEATTY, Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York, Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER, Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois, Mrs. LAWRENCE, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Ms. WILSON of Florida, Mr. BROWN, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mrs. DEMINGS, Mr. EVANS, Ms. NORTON, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Mr. ESPAILLAT, Ms. WILLIAMS of Georgia, Mr. HORSFORD, Ms. JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. CASTRO of Texas, Ms. KELLY of Illinois, Mr. PAYNE, Mr. KHANNA, Ms. BUSH, Mrs. HAYES, Mr. NADLER, Ms. STRICKLAND, and Mr. HASTINGS) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary, and in addition to the Committees on Education and Labor, and the Budget, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To prohibit discrimination based on an individual's texture
or style of hair.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Creating a Respectful
3 and Open World for Natural Hair Act of 2021” or the
4 “CROWN Act of 2021”.

5 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS; SENSE OF CONGRESS; PURPOSE.**

6 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

7 (1) Throughout United States history, society
8 has used (in conjunction with skin color) hair tex-
9 ture and hairstyle to classify individuals on the basis
10 of race.

11 (2) Like one’s skin color, one’s hair has served
12 as a basis of race and national origin discrimination.

13 (3) Racial and national origin discrimination
14 can and do occur because of longstanding racial and
15 national origin biases and stereotypes associated
16 with hair texture and style.

17 (4) For example, routinely, people of African
18 descent are deprived of educational and employment
19 opportunities because they are adorned with natural
20 or protective hairstyles in which hair is tightly coiled
21 or tightly curled, or worn in locs, cornrows, twists,
22 braids, Bantu knots, or Afros.

23 (5) Racial and national origin discrimination is
24 reflected in school and workplace policies and prac-
25 tices that bar natural or protective hairstyles com-
26 monly worn by people of African descent.

1 (6) For example, as recently as 2018, the
2 United States Armed Forces had grooming policies
3 that barred natural or protective hairstyles that
4 servicemembers of African descent commonly wear
5 and that described these hairstyles as “unkempt”.

6 (7) The United States Army also recognized
7 that prohibitions against natural or protective hair-
8 styles that African-American soldiers are commonly
9 adorned with are racially discriminatory, harmful,
10 and bear no relationship to African-American serv-
11 icewomen’s occupational qualifications and their
12 ability to serve and protect the Nation. As of Feb-
13 ruary 2021, the United States Army removed min-
14 imum hair length requirements and lifted restric-
15 tions on any soldier wearing braids, twists, locs, and
16 cornrows in order to promote inclusivity and accom-
17 modate the hair needs of soldiers.

18 (8) As a type of racial or national origin dis-
19 crimination, discrimination on the basis of natural
20 or protective hairstyles that people of African de-
21 scend are commonly adorned with violates existing
22 Federal law, including provisions of the Civil Rights
23 Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000e et seq.), section 1977
24 of the Revised Statutes (42 U.S.C. 1981), and the
25 Fair Housing Act (42 U.S.C. 3601 et seq.). How-

1 ever, some Federal courts have misinterpreted Fed-
2 eral civil rights law by narrowly interpreting the
3 meaning of race or national origin, and thereby per-
4 mitting, for example, employers to discriminate
5 against people of African descent who wear natural
6 or protective hairstyles even though the employment
7 policies involved are not related to workers' ability to
8 perform their jobs.

9 (9) Applying this narrow interpretation of race
10 or national origin has resulted in a lack of Federal
11 civil rights protection for individuals who are dis-
12 criminated against on the basis of characteristics
13 that are commonly associated with race and national
14 origin.

15 (10) In 2019 and 2020, State legislatures and
16 municipal bodies throughout the United States have
17 introduced and passed legislation that rejects certain
18 Federal courts' restrictive interpretation of race and
19 national origin, and expressly classifies race and na-
20 tional origin discrimination as inclusive of discrimi-
21 nation on the basis of natural or protective hair-
22 styles commonly associated with race and national
23 origin.

24 (b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Con-
25 gress that—

1 (1) the Federal Government should acknowl-
2 edge that individuals who have hair texture or wear
3 a hairstyle that is historically and contemporarily as-
4 sociated with African Americans or persons of Afri-
5 can descent systematically suffer harmful discrimi-
6 nation in schools, workplaces, and other contexts
7 based upon longstanding race and national origin
8 stereotypes and biases;

9 (2) a clear and comprehensive law should ad-
10 dress the systematic deprivation of educational, em-
11 ployment, and other opportunities on the basis of
12 hair texture and hairstyle that are commonly associ-
13 ated with race or national origin;

14 (3) clear, consistent, and enforceable legal
15 standards must be provided to redress the wide-
16 spread incidences of race and national origin dis-
17 crimination based upon hair texture and hairstyle in
18 schools, workplaces, housing, federally funded insti-
19 tutions, and other contexts;

20 (4) it is necessary to prevent educational, em-
21 ployment, and other decisions, practices, and policies
22 generated by or reflecting negative biases and
23 stereotypes related to race or national origin;

24 (5) the Federal Government must play a key
25 role in enforcing Federal civil rights laws in a way

1 that secures equal educational, employment, and
2 other opportunities for all individuals regardless of
3 their race or national origin;

4 (6) the Federal Government must play a central
5 role in enforcing the standards established under
6 this Act on behalf of individuals who suffer race or
7 national origin discrimination based upon hair tex-
8 ture and hairstyle;

9 (7) it is necessary to prohibit and provide rem-
10 edies for the harms suffered as a result of race or
11 national origin discrimination on the basis of hair
12 texture and hairstyle; and

13 (8) it is necessary to mandate that school,
14 workplace, and other applicable standards be applied
15 in a nondiscriminatory manner and to explicitly pro-
16 hibit the adoption or implementation of grooming re-
17 quirements that disproportionately impact people of
18 African descent.

19 (c) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this Act is to institute
20 definitions of race and national origin for Federal civil
21 rights laws that effectuate the comprehensive scope of pro-
22 tection Congress intended to be afforded by such laws and
23 Congress' objective to eliminate race and national origin
24 discrimination in the United States.

1 **SEC. 3. FEDERALLY ASSISTED PROGRAMS.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—No individual in the United
3 States shall be excluded from participation in, be denied
4 the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under,
5 any program or activity receiving Federal financial assist-
6 ance, based on the individual’s hair texture or hairstyle,
7 if that hair texture or that hairstyle is commonly associ-
8 ated with a particular race or national origin (including
9 a hairstyle in which hair is tightly coiled or tightly curled,
10 locs, cornrows, twists, braids, Bantu knots, and Afros).

11 (b) ENFORCEMENT.—Subsection (a) shall be en-
12 forced in the same manner and by the same means, includ-
13 ing with the same jurisdiction, as if such subsection was
14 incorporated in title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
15 (42 U.S.C. 2000d et seq.), and as if a violation of sub-
16 section (a) was treated as if it was a violation of section
17 601 of such Act (42 U.S.C. 2000d).

18 (c) DEFINITIONS.—In this section—

19 (1) the term “program or activity” has the
20 meaning given the term in section 606 of the Civil
21 Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000d–4a); and

22 (2) the terms “race” and “national origin”
23 mean, respectively, “race” within the meaning of the
24 term in section 601 of that Act (42 U.S.C. 2000d)
25 and “national origin” within the meaning of the
26 term in that section 601.

1 **SEC. 4. HOUSING PROGRAMS.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—No person in the United States
3 shall be subjected to a discriminatory housing practice
4 based on the person’s hair texture or hairstyle, if that hair
5 texture or that hairstyle is commonly associated with a
6 particular race or national origin (including a hairstyle in
7 which hair is tightly coiled or tightly curled, locs, corn-
8 rows, twists, braids, Bantu knots, and Afros).

9 (b) ENFORCEMENT.—Subsection (a) shall be en-
10 forced in the same manner and by the same means, includ-
11 ing with the same jurisdiction, as if such subsection was
12 incorporated in the Fair Housing Act (42 U.S.C. 3601
13 et seq.), and as if a violation of subsection (a) was treated
14 as if it was a discriminatory housing practice.

15 (c) DEFINITION.—In this section—

16 (1) the terms “discriminatory housing practice”
17 and “person” have the meanings given the terms in
18 section 802 of the Fair Housing Act (42 U.S.C.
19 3602); and

20 (2) the terms “race” and “national origin”
21 mean, respectively, “race” within the meaning of the
22 term in section 804 of that Act (42 U.S.C. 3604)
23 and “national origin” within the meaning of the
24 term in that section 804.

1 SEC. 5. PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS.

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—No person in the United States
3 shall be subjected to a practice prohibited under section
4 201, 202, or 203 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42
5 U.S.C. 2000a et seq.), based on the person’s hair texture
6 or hairstyle, if that hair texture or that hairstyle is com-
7 monly associated with a particular race or national origin
8 (including a hairstyle in which hair is tightly coiled or
9 tightly curled, locs, cornrows, twists, braids, Bantu knots,
10 and Afros).

11 (b) ENFORCEMENT.—Subsection (a) shall be en-
12 forced in the same manner and by the same means, includ-
13 ing with the same jurisdiction, as if such subsection was
14 incorporated in title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1964,
15 and as if a violation of subsection (a) was treated as if
16 it was a violation of section 201, 202, or 203, as appro-
17 priate, of such Act.

18 (c) DEFINITION.—In this section, the terms “race”
19 and “national origin” mean, respectively, “race” within
20 the meaning of the term in section 201 of that Act (42
21 U.S.C. 2000e) and “national origin” within the meaning
22 of the term in that section 201.

23 SEC. 6. EMPLOYMENT.

24 (a) PROHIBITION.—It shall be an unlawful employ-
25 ment practice for an employer, employment agency, labor
26 organization, or joint labor-management committee con-

1 trolling apprenticeship or other training or retraining (in-
2 cluding on-the-job training programs) to fail or refuse to
3 hire or to discharge any individual, or otherwise to dis-
4 criminate against an individual, based on the individual’s
5 hair texture or hairstyle, if that hair texture or that hair-
6 style is commonly associated with a particular race or na-
7 tional origin (including a hairstyle in which hair is tightly
8 coiled or tightly curled, locs, cornrows, twists, braids,
9 Bantu knots, and Afros).

10 (b) ENFORCEMENT.—Subsection (a) shall be en-
11 forced in the same manner and by the same means, includ-
12 ing with the same jurisdiction, as if such subsection was
13 incorporated in title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
14 (42 U.S.C. 2000e et seq.), and as if a violation of sub-
15 section (a) was treated as if it was a violation of section
16 703 or 704, as appropriate, of such Act (42 U.S.C.
17 2000e–2, 2000e–3).

18 (c) DEFINITIONS.—In this section the terms “per-
19 son”, “race”, and “national origin” have the meanings
20 given the terms in section 701 of the Civil Rights Act of
21 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000e).

22 **SEC. 7. EQUAL RIGHTS UNDER THE LAW.**

23 (a) IN GENERAL.—No person in the United States
24 shall be subjected to a practice prohibited under section
25 1977 of the Revised Statutes (42 U.S.C. 1981), based on

1 the person’s hair texture or hairstyle, if that hair texture
2 or that hairstyle is commonly associated with a particular
3 race or national origin (including a hairstyle in which hair
4 is tightly coiled or tightly curled, locs, cornrows, twists,
5 braids, Bantu knots, and Afros).

6 (b) ENFORCEMENT.—Subsection (a) shall be en-
7 forced in the same manner and by the same means, includ-
8 ing with the same jurisdiction, as if such subsection was
9 incorporated in section 1977 of the Revised Statutes, and
10 as if a violation of subsection (a) was treated as if it was
11 a violation of that section 1977.

12 **SEC. 8. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.**

13 Nothing in this Act shall be construed to limit defini-
14 tions of race or national origin under the Civil Rights Act
15 of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000a et seq.), the Fair Housing Act
16 (42 U.S.C. 3601 et seq.), or section 1977 of the Revised
17 Statutes (42 U.S.C. 1981).

18 **SEC. 9. DETERMINATION OF BUDGETARY EFFECTS.**

19 The budgetary effects of this Act, for the purpose of
20 complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010,
21 shall be determined by reference to the latest statement
22 titled “Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation” for this
23 Act, submitted for printing in the Congressional Record
24 by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, pro-

- 1 vided that such statement has been submitted prior to the
- 2 vote on passage.

