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**CIVIL RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS FOLLOW STATE COURT RULING WITH A
LETTER TO TEXAS SCHOOL LEADERS WARNING ABOUT
RACE-BASED HAIR DISCRIMINATION**

(New York, NY - March 27) Sixteen civil rights organizations sent [a letter](#) to every school superintendent in Texas clarifying misconceptions about hair discrimination in the wake of a state court ruling about the Texas Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair Act (“Texas CROWN Act”). The Texas CROWN Act strengthened pre-existing constitutional and statutory prohibitions on racial discrimination by amending the Texas Education Code to explicitly prohibit racial discrimination based on students’ hair texture or protective styles, such as afros, cornrows, braids, locs and twists (bar culturally significant hairstyles). The law applies to schools, workplaces, and public housing spaces and took effect on September 1, 2023.

“A multi-racial, multi-ethnic democracy requires cultural sensitivity, equality, respect, and inclusivity in the classroom and indeed the nation. No student should be forced to forgo equal educational opportunities because they wear their hair in a way that displays pride in their racial heritage. We cannot close the schoolhouse door to children of color, who already endure countless hurdles in their quest to get an education, because their physical appearance does not meet some arbitrary standard of acceptability,” said [Patricia Okonta, LDF Assistant Counsel for Strategic Initiatives](#). “Educators have a responsibility to support, not hinder students. Black children’s ability to get an education, a job, or housing should not hinge on their willingness to assimilate to White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant beauty norms.”

As explained in the letter, policies that discriminate against students based on their culturally significant hair styles are also inconsistent with both state and federal law and harm children of color. For example, in 2020, a federal court in [Arnold v. Barbers Hill Independent School District](#) held that LDF’s client was likely to succeed in showing a hair length restriction applicable only to male students was unconstitutional sex and race discrimination as well as a violation of the client’s First Amendment rights. Other students have also obtained temporary restraining orders barring the enforcement of such policies in their school districts (see [here](#) and [here](#)).

“Members of the national Dignity in Schools Campaign were honored to stand in solidarity with Darryl George in Chambers County, TX on February 22, 2024. Despite the unfortunate ruling against him, we draw inspiration from his courage; moreover, we acknowledge the significance of his case within this historical moment. The nation will commemorate the 70th anniversary of *Brown v. Board* in May, and Darryl’s story poignantly epitomizes **the most basic of its** unfulfilled promises,” said Andrew Hairston, Education Justice Project Director of Texas Appleseed and co-chair of the Coordinating Committee of the national Dignity in Schools

Campaign. “We will keep fighting to ensure that school safety and school climate policies actually meet the needs of Black children across the U.S.”

[A recent study by the ACLU of Texas](#) found over 7% of Texas school districts that were surveyed explicitly bar culturally significant hairstyles. A comprehensive [study](#) of nearly one million public secondary students in Texas showed that students subjected to exclusionary discipline for a discretionary violation—such as suspensions due to discriminatory grooming policies—were “twice as likely to repeat his or her grade,” more likely to drop out, and three times more likely to be in contact with the juvenile justice system the following year. Moreover, such policies violate both the Texas CROWN Act and other state and federal anti-discrimination laws.

The letter offers specific guidance to Texas school leaders to ensure their dress and grooming policies promote the safety and wellbeing of all students and educators, while also complying with federal and state anti-discrimination laws and protecting against unintentional, and potentially unlawful, consequences.

[The CROWN Act](#), first passed in California in 2019, aims to end the denial of employment, educational, and other opportunities because of natural hair texture and protective hairstyles. To date, 23 states, including Alaska, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Washington, as well as the U.S. Virgin Islands, have adopted versions of the CROWN Act. In addition, Arizona’s Governor recently signed an executive order barring hair discrimination, inspired by the CROWN Act.

The letter to school superintendents was signed by [Legal Defense Fund](#); [American Association of University Women](#); the [ACLU of Texas](#); [Anti-Defamation League Texas](#); [Children at Risk](#); [Children’s Defense Fund of Texas](#); [Education Law Center](#); [The Education Trust](#); [Intercultural Development Research Association](#); [We Measure](#); [the Native American Rights Fund](#); the [National Center for Youth Law](#); [Public Justice](#); [Texas Appleseed](#); [Public TSTA](#), and the [Sikh Coalition](#).

Read the full letter [here](#).

To learn more about LDF’s work advancing the CROWN Act, see [here](#).

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About the Legal Defense Fund: Founded in 1940, the Legal Defense Fund (LDF) is the nation’s first civil rights law organization. In media attributions, please refer to us as the Legal Defense Fund or LDF. Please note that LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights.