



## **For Immediate Release**

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### **Media Contacts**

Legal Defense Fund - Chris Ford, 212-965-2200 / [media@naacpldf.org](mailto:media@naacpldf.org)

ACLU of Texas — Kristi Gross, [media@aclutx.org](mailto:media@aclutx.org)

## **Civil Rights Organizations Send Letter to Texas Superintendents Calling for Accordance with CROWN Act**

Civil rights organizations [sent a letter](#) to every K-12 superintendent in Texas today urging them to update their policies to be compliant with the Texas Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair Act (“Texas CROWN Act”). The Texas CROWN Act amends the Texas Education Code to prohibit racial discrimination based on students’ hair texture or protective styles, such as afros, cornrows, braids, locs and twists. The new law applies to schools, workplaces, and public housing spaces and will take effect on September 1, 2023.

The letter highlights the important role that school districts’ leadership will play in ending [race-based hair discrimination](#), and urges school districts to prevent harm to students by updating their student handbooks and codes of conduct to conform with the new law.

“The CROWN Act will help protect the rights of future students like me,” said **Legal Defense Fund (LDF) Client Kaden Bradford**, a plaintiff in a [lawsuit](#) challenging the Texas-based Barbers Hill Independent School District (BHISD)’s discriminatory hair policy. “It will prevent students from being targeted for who they are and what they look like. Students won’t have to be afraid of being called out of class or getting suspended because of their hair.”

“School is a place where you truly get a chance to find yourself, see who you are, and how you want to express yourself. For me personally, it is very validating to see something that we fought for so long come to fruition,” said **LDF Client De’Andre Arnold**, a plaintiff in the same BHISD [lawsuit](#). “We are preventing generations of people from dealing with what we had to deal with. I believe Barbers Hill and all schools in Texas should think about their [hair and grooming] policies and the effects they have on their students.”

“Too often, invidious discrimination hides behind seemingly race- or gender-neutral grooming policies that profile, single out, and disproportionately burden Black, Indigenous, LGBTQ+, and other students in Texas,” said **Patricia Okonta, LDF Assistant Counsel**. “The passage of the Texas CROWN Act is significant because it unequivocally prohibits discrimination based on hair texture or type, and reiterates that no student should be targeted or excluded for racially or culturally significant hair formations, hair textures, and hairstyles. All Texas school districts must ensure that their policies align with this new law and ensure that no student is punished for simply expressing themselves as they are.”

The ACLU of Texas and its partners conducted a statewide dress code survey. The full results of the survey will be released in the fall, but the preliminary findings indicate concerning trends. Based on dress and grooming codes from 2022-2023, approximately 20% of school districts in Texas (of which there are over 1000) had rules that prohibit or restrict hair textures and styles that are commonly or historically associated with race. Almost 80% of surveyed districts had rules that use subjective hair standards, which risk being disproportionately enforced against students of color and LGBTQIA+ students. Those districts run the risk of violating the CROWN Act and federal anti-discrimination law.

"Discriminatory dress code discipline endured by so many Texas students — especially our Black and Brown students — must end," said **Chloe Kempf, ACLU of Texas attorney**. "We urge all Texas school districts to immediately ensure that their dress and grooming code policies and enforcement comply with their obligations under the Texas CROWN Act and federal law. All students, no matter their race, religion, or gender, deserve the freedom to express themselves at school, free from discrimination."

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, 22 additional 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, Virginia, and Washington, as well as the U.S. Virgin Islands, have adopted versions of the CROWN Act.

The letter was signed by the [American Civil Liberties Union of Texas](#) (ACLU of Texas), [Anti-Defamation League](#), [Children at Risk](#), [Children's Defense Fund - Texas](#), [Human Rights Campaign](#) (HRC), [Intercultural Development Research Association](#) (IDRA), [Legal Defense Fund](#) (LDF), [MEASURE](#), [National Women's Law Center](#), [Texas Appleseed](#), [Transgender Education Network of Texas](#), and [Young Leaders, Strong City](#).

Read the full letter [here](#).

