

ALERT EMPLOYMENT & LABOR



Allegheny County and Pittsburgh CROWN Acts Prohibit Hairstyle Discrimination

At the end of October 2020, the Allegheny County Council and Pittsburgh City Council each passed bills entitled “Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair Acts,” prohibiting hairstyle-based discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations. Protective and cultural hair textures and hairstyles, including braids, cornrows, locs, Bantu knots, Afros, and twists, are now protected under these new laws, known as the CROWN Acts. Employers in Allegheny County should review their dress codes and grooming standards to ensure compliance with the CROWN Acts.

The two CROWN Acts are nearly identical. The [Allegheny County CROWN Act](#) defines “hairstyle” as “any characteristic, texture, form, or manner of wearing an individual’s hair if such characteristic, texture, form or manner is commonly associated with a particular race, national origin, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, or religion.”

The [Pittsburgh CROWN Act](#) defines “hairstyle” as “hair texture and styles of hair of any length, such as protective or cultural hairstyles, natural hairstyles, and other forms of hair presentation.” Mayor Bill Peduto submitted the CROWN Act for the City Council’s consideration earlier in October, citing the 2019 report of Pittsburgh’s Gender Equity Commission that found inequities and barriers facing people of color—especially women—in the city regarding their hairstyles and natural hair.

Individuals within the City of Pittsburgh seeking to make claims of discrimination based on hairstyle can report the matter to the City’s Commission on Human Relations, the agency tasked with enforcing the CROWN Act. The Commission has released extensive [guidance](#) for information regarding the CROWN Act in the employment, housing, and public accommodation sectors.

If you have any questions about the impact of the CROWN Acts, particularly on your existing personnel policies, please contact Alexandra G. Farone at (412) 394-6521 or afarone@babstcalland.com.

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