



AAUW Florida Priority: Prohibited Discrimination Based on Hairstyle in the Education System. The American Association of University Women of Florida has over 10,000 members and supporters statewide. We advance equity for women and girls through advocacy, education,

[SB 590/HB 51 Prohibited Discrimination Based on Hairstyle in the Education System.](#)

2023 Florida Session

Senator Powell / Representative Driskell

Purpose of Bill: Defines "protected hairstyle"; prohibits discrimination based on protected hairstyle in Florida K-20 public education system; provides that term "race" includes protected hairstyles for purposes of United States Code within public & private education system. Bill would create an Act in the Florida Statutes, cited as the "Creating a Respectful an Open World for Natural Hair Act" or "CROWN Act". The act defines protected hairstyle" as hair characteristics historically associated with race, such as hair texture and styles, including, but not limited to, afros, braids, locks, or twists.

Background: Hair discrimination is rooted in systemic racism, and its purpose is to preserve white spaces. Policies that prohibit natural hairstyles, like afros, braids, bantu knots, and locs, have been used to justify the removal of Black children from classrooms, and Black adults from their employment. With no nationwide legal protections against hair discrimination, Black people are often left to risk facing consequences at school or work for their natural hair or invest time and money to conform to Eurocentric professionalism and beauty standards.

Black adults, school children and members of the military have long been discriminated against because of their natural hairstyles, such as afros, twists, locs and braids. By penalizing hairstyles that fall outside of Eurocentric norms of beauty, discriminatory grooming policies in schools and workplaces are directly linked to institutional racism. Examples include the FedEx employees suing the company after they were fired for having dreadlocks, the school district that banned a student from attending his high school graduation, and a high school wrestler who was forced to cut his hair to compete in a meet.

A study by researchers at Duke University found that participants viewed Black hairstyles like afros, twists or braids as less professional. The study determined that Black women with natural hairstyles are less likely to land job interviews than white women or Black women with straightened hair.

Summary: Hair discrimination is rooted in systemic racism and erodes trust between students and the education system that is supposed to care for them. Protective styles, locs, headwraps, and durags are not just vital to the protection of Black hair, they are expressions of culture and identity. *Discriminating against Black hair reinforces the othering of Black children and is another way that Black identity is policed.*

Relationship to AAUW Mission: The passage of SB 590/HB 51 supports AAUW's commitment to equity for ALL. AAUW Florida supports the passage of SB 590/HB 51.

For more information: [AAUW's Systemic Racism and the Gender Pay Gap](#) and [Issues Affecting Female Student of Color](#).