



For Immediate Release
Wednesday, September 16, 2020

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LDF Statement on House Judiciary Committee Considering CROWN Act

Yesterday, the House Judiciary Committee advanced the Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair (CROWN) Act, a bill that would prohibit racial discrimination based on a person's hair texture or hairstyle. The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) endorsed the CROWN Act when it was first introduced in November 2019. In response to today's first meetings about the bill, LDF Director of Policy Lisa Cylar Barrett released the following statement:

"We are thrilled to see the Committee advance the CROWN Act. This bill is crucial because in most states there are no legal measures in place that protect Black people from hair discrimination. Black hair, like many other aspects of Black identity, is criminalized in public spaces. As a result, Black people face backlash for their natural hair and protective styles – acutely in the workplace and in schools.

"Discrimination against Black hair often hides behind seemingly race-neutral grooming policies and dress codes, when in actuality, these policies and practices profile, single out, and disproportionately burden Black people for wearing natural hairstyles or protective styling intimately connected with their Black identity.

"We can no longer allow employers and educators to discriminate against how hair naturally grows and push false stereotypes about appearance, professionalism, and acceptability. Black people should be able to exist in all spaces as their full selves. One of the best steps Congress can take to make that happen is to pass the CROWN Act."

LDF has defended multiple clients against Black hair discrimination. In May 2020, LDF filed a lawsuit on behalf of Everett De'Andre Arnold, Sandy Arnold, and Cindy Bradford (on behalf of her son K.B.) against the Barbers Hill Independent School District (BHISD), located in Mont Belvieu, Texas, its Board of Trustees, and additional individual defendants challenging the district's discriminatory hair policy. Arnold and Bradford were informed by BHISD earlier this year that they must either cut their natural locs or no longer participate in regular classes and school activities, including Arnold's graduation ceremony.

In August, a judge for the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas granted a request made to enjoin enforcement of BHISD's discriminatory dress and grooming policy, enabling K.B. to return to class, extracurricular activities, and all the normal educational opportunities offered to Barbers Hill High School students while the lawsuit related to BHISD's policy continues. The district has filed a notice to appeal the August decision.

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Founded in 1940, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) is the nation's first civil and human rights law organization. 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. LDF's Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the NAACP Legal Defense Fund or LDF.

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