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NAACP Legal Defense Fund Sends Letter to Florida Department of Education to Express Concern Over Discriminatory Hair Policies

The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) today sent a letter to the Florida Department of Education informing it that a number of private schools receiving federal scholarship funds have dress code policies that are potentially discriminatory against Black students.

The policies prohibit hairstyles commonly worn by African American students. In doing so, they violate the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in programs and activities operated by federal funding recipients.

The letter notes that Clinton Stanley Jr., a six-year-old Black student at A Book's Christian Academy in Apopka, Florida, was denied entry to his first day of school this year because his hair did not conform to the school's policy.

"Instead of outright bans based on skin color that prevailed during Jim Crow, we now see subtler restrictions, like these policies that target hairstyles predominant among or unique to African Americans," said LDF Assistant Counsel Angel Harris. "But the effect is the same: to unfairly and illegally deny students of color an equal opportunity to study and learn. LDF is committed to ending these practices."

LDF asks the Florida Department of Education to review the school hair policies identified in our letter, and to ask schools with discriminatory policies to rescind them. It also asks the department to ensure that any replacement guidelines are implemented only after careful consultation with current and prospective African American students and their families.

Last year, LDF [joined several partners](#) in representing the family of Mya and Deanna Cook, two Black Boston-area students who were repeatedly punished by their school for wearing their hair in braids with extensions.

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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 and 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.