



GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

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**Governor Shapiro Signs CROWN Act into Law, Protecting
Pennsylvanians from Hair-Based Discrimination and Expanding
Opportunity in the Commonwealth**

Governor Shapiro signed [HB 439](#) into law, expanding the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act to protect natural hair textures and styles tied to racial and cultural identity.

The new law strengthens civil rights protections, affirms the dignity of all Pennsylvanians, and advances real freedom and expands opportunity by ensuring every person can work and thrive without bias based on their hair.



Philadelphia, PA – Today, **Governor Josh Shapiro** joined legislative leaders and local business owners to sign [HB 439](#), also known as the **Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair (CROWN) Act**, into law. The legislation amends the **Pennsylvania Human Relations Act (PHRA)** to expand the definition of “race” to include traits historically associated with race, including hair texture, protective hairstyles, and religious creed.

With the signing of this bill, Pennsylvania becomes the 28th state in the nation to prohibit discrimination based on hair texture and protective hairstyles historically associated with race, ensuring that all Pennsylvanians can live and work without fear of racial bias in their hair or appearance. According to a 2022 Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) report, 916 complaints were filed that year alone related to racial discrimination involving hair texture and protective hairstyles.

“Real freedom means being respected for who you are — no matter what you look like, where you come from, who you love, or who you pray to,” said **Governor Shapiro**. “For too long, many Pennsylvanians have faced discrimination simply for hairstyles that reflect their identity and culture — that ends today. I’m grateful to Speaker McClinton, Representative Mayes, and the advocates who worked to get this done. We’re building a Commonwealth where everyone is welcomed, respected, and protected.”

Speaking at **Island Design Natural Hair Studio in Philadelphia**, Governor Shapiro was joined by **business owner Lorraine Ruley, House Speaker Joanna McClinton, Representative La’Tasha Mayes**, and CROWN Act champion and advocate **Dr. Adjoa B. Asamoah**.

“This is going to help people by making sure that, wherever you work, or wherever you’re applying for a job, they can’t look at your hair and size you up—not based on

your qualifications and all of the professional development you have and all of your education,” said **House Speaker McClinton**. “They will not look at your hair and decide you can’t work here. They will not look at your hair and decide you don’t belong in this C-suite. They will not look at your hair and say, ‘you can’t be in the boardroom.’”

The CROWN Act prohibits employers from discriminating against employees or applicants based on hairstyles such as locs, braids, twists, coils, Bantu knots, afros, and extensions, while still allowing businesses to enforce valid health and safety policies that apply equally to all employees.

The legislation was introduced by Representative Mayes and passed the General Assembly with strong bipartisan support.

“I want to thank Speaker McClinton for her tireless efforts — long before I ever became a member of the PA House of Representatives — to see this bill pass out of the House and Senate and now signed into law,” said **Representative Mayes**. “I also want to thank my staff; the statewide PA CROWN Act coalition of over 100 organizations, businesses, unions, municipalities, and entities that have garnered public support for House Bill 439 all across this Commonwealth; and Dr. Adjoa B. Asamoah, the CROWN Act champion who has led this fight for years at the federal level; the national CROWN Act Coalition; and so many more.”

Since taking office, **Governor Shapiro** has advanced numerous measures to expand opportunity for historically disadvantaged businesses, including eliminating licensing requirements for natural hair braiders and increasing access to state contracts for Black- and Latino-owned businesses. Under the Governor’s leadership, the Commonwealth has:

- Cut business filing processing times from weeks to same-day processing for small business and cosmetology licenses.
- Increased spending with Black- and Latino-owned businesses by 45 percent, reaching \$150 million in FY 2023-24.
- Surpassed \$1 billion in contracts with small businesses, small diverse businesses, and veteran-owned enterprises for two consecutive years.
- Secured \$20 million annually for the Historically Disadvantaged Business Program, supporting small business growth statewide.

The bill signing builds on Governor Shapiro’s broader work to remove unnecessary barriers for workers, entrepreneurs, and historically disadvantaged businesses.

“As a child growing up in the Virgin Islands with natural hair, wearing my natural hair has been all that I know,” said **Lorraine Ruley, owner of Island Design Natural Hair Studio**. “But as I opened my salon and spoke to different clients, clients that wear braids are telling me, ‘Lorraine, I have to take these braids out. I have a job interview,’

or ‘Lorraine, I have to cut my locs down because my job says they’re too long.’ The experience has been really heartbreaking... so, the CROWN Act is very important to me.”

“Too many black children have been suspended and missed what should be valuable instruction time because their hair, worn in ways that are aligned with their racial identity, have been deemed a violation of school rules. Too many black adults have been passed over for promotions, had offers of employment rescinded, and even been fired for showing up authentically,” said **Dr. Adjoa B. Asamoah, the ‘CROWN Act’ champion**. “And with an undeniable correlation between the use of chemical relaxers and the increased likelihood of developing uterine fibroids and cancer—the cost of conformity is simply too expensive.”

“The CROWN Act protects dignity and affirms the freedom to honor our cultural roots. I’m incredibly proud to see Pennsylvania adopt this essential anti-discrimination legislation,” said **Senator Vincent Hughes**. “Discrimination is unacceptable. This legislation makes clear that in Pennsylvania, we celebrate people for who they are and protect their right to fully embrace their identity.”

The signing of the CROWN Act builds on these efforts to ensure Pennsylvania is a place where all residents can thrive, free from discrimination, and are empowered to succeed in business, education, and the workplace.

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