

# The Oregon CROWN Act



## Know Your Rights Guide for Black Students and Families

### What is the CROWN Act?

The CROWN Act makes it illegal to discriminate against Black people who are wearing braids, locs, twists, knots, or protective hairstyles (including a head/hair wrap in the workplace and public schools, community colleges, and universities).

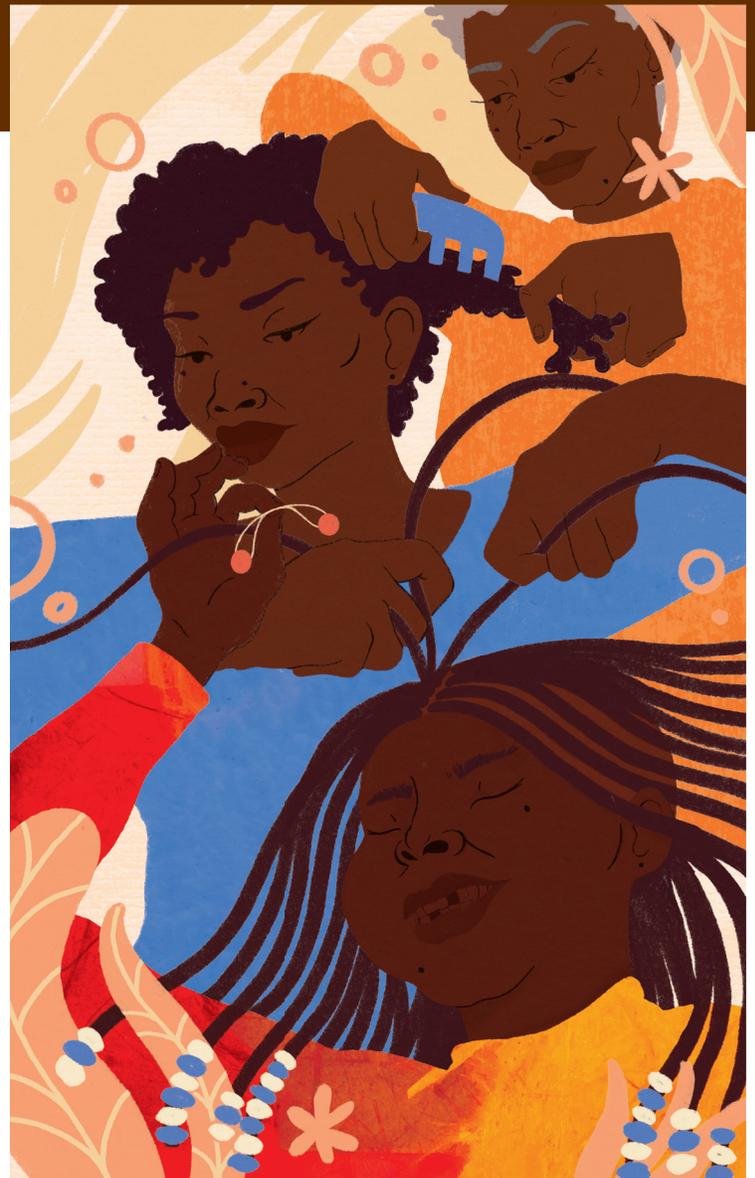
Based on their hair, Black Oregonians face many kinds of discrimination in workplaces and school settings. Black students have sometimes been asked to:

- Remove adornments or accessories (i.e., beads) from their hair to participate in activities
- Undo their hair style to conduct a lice check
- Avoid certain colors in their hair or head wrap
- Remove a head/hair wrap because it wasn't part of the "uniform"
- Cut locs in order to participate in afterschool activities and athletics

Effective January 1, 2022, the CROWN Act makes this kind of policing of Black hair illegal in all Oregon workplaces and public education institutions.

### What does this mean in schools across Oregon?

The CROWN Act will stop Black students from being targeted by teachers, school and university officials for how they are wearing their hair; and it will prevent adults (coaches, teachers, etc.) from discriminating against Black students involved in extracurricular activities because of their hair style. No student can be discriminated against or be asked to change their hairstyle thanks to the passage of the CROWN Act. Starting in 2022, you can help Oregon enforce and strengthen the CROWN Act.



ART BY PAOLA DE LA CRUZ

### What steps do I take if I think my child's rights were violated at school?

1. **Write down what happened and as many details as you and your child can recall.**  
Document the names of the people involved, what was said, and who did what.
  - If you make a verbal complaint, write down who you spoke to, what day and time you spoke to them, and summarize the conversation, including anything the person told you in response.

- 2. File a complaint at your school.** School processes often start with your principal. Once you complain, your school must respond to you in 2 days.
- When filing the complaint, use phrases like “hair discrimination” and “violation of the Oregon CROWN Act” to clarify for school officials the specific state policy that was violated. If you make the complaint in person or by phone, document the complaint by writing down who you spoke with, on what day you spoke with them, and what was said by you and by school staff.
  - If you make a complaint in writing, keep a copy! E-mail can be a good way to create and keep records of your complaint process.
  - If you received anything back from a school official, keep that for your records. It is important to protect your rights by keeping track of your written and spoken complaint.

- 3. If the complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction, you can file a complaint with the Oregon Department of Education (ODE).** ODE requires you to exhaust local processes prior to their involvement. However, if 30 days pass and your local process has not resolved the issue, you can go directly to ODE.
- The Oregon Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights
    - Winston Cornwall (he/him)
      - Cell: 503-689-5195
      - [winston.cornwall@state.or.us](mailto:winston.cornwall@state.or.us)
    - Complaint form: [bit.ly/CrownComplaint](https://bit.ly/CrownComplaint)

- 3. Finally, you may consider filing a complaint with the US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights.** Oregon’s intake specialist can be reached by phone at (503) 727-1193 and you can also file a complaint at their website: <https://civilrights.justice.gov>

### Can my child be punished for speaking up if they experience hair discrimination?

Oregon’s state constitution and our federal constitution include strong protections for student speech. As long as your speech does not create a “material and substantial disruption” (this language is the legal standard that the courts use) to the learning environment, you cannot be punished for it. That means filing a complaint or interrupting harmful behavior is very likely protected speech.

### What happens if my complaint isn’t addressed to my satisfaction or my child’s satisfaction?

After taking all the steps laid out in school policy and Oregon Department of Education guidelines, it’s possible that the findings or outcome may not be what you expected or wanted. Self-care strategies like talking to others about what happened or seeking counseling to process feelings, or community care strategies like speaking out at school board meetings or sharing your story with the media, are some of the ways that your family can take steps that help with healing and after-care. Check out this resource list for Black Oregonians if you or someone you know has experienced hair discrimination: [bit.ly/crownaftercare](https://bit.ly/crownaftercare)



*Forward Together works to ensure all families have the rights, recognition, and resources they need to thrive. Follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter at @FwdTogether.*

*Thank you to the ACLU of Oregon for assistance with this fact sheet. Contact [emma@forwardtogether.org](mailto:emma@forwardtogether.org) for more info or to get involved*