



July 15, 2019

New York Expands Racial Bias Law to Include Hair Texture and Hairstyles

On July 12, 2019, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo signed into law a bill prohibiting race discrimination based on natural hair or hairstyles. The measure, which took effect immediately, amends the New York State Human Rights Law and the Education Law by prohibiting discrimination based on “traits historically associated with race, including but not limited to, hair texture and protective hairstyles.” The measure defines “Protective hairstyles” to include “such hairstyles as braids, locks, and twists.”

The state-wide changes in the law follow New York City’s similar ban earlier this year, as we reported in our previous alert on February 21, 2019, in which the New York City Commission on Human Rights issued legal enforcement guidance on hair-based race discrimination.

Takeaway for Employers

New York covered employers should ensure their existing grooming and appearance policies comply with the new changes in the law.

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If you have any questions regarding the new changes in the law, please do not hesitate to contact us.

[**PUTNEY, TWOMBLY, HALL & HIRSON LLP**](#)