



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: Senate Bill 531 - Discrimination - Definition of Race - Hair Texture and Hairstyles

SPONSOR: Senator Smith, *et al.*

HEARING DATE: February 18, 2020

COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 531 - Discrimination - Definition of Race - Hair Texture and Hairstyles**, which defines "race," for the purposes of specified laws prohibiting discrimination, as including traits historically associated with race, including hair texture, afro hairstyles, and protective hairstyles. The bill also defines "protective hairstyle" as a hairstyle designed to protect the ends of the hair by decreasing tangling, shedding, and breakage, including braids, twists, and locks.

Black hair in its natural state is typically defined by its curly or coiled texture. African American hair is as diverse as the African American experience. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are over 40 million individuals who identify as Black or African American in the United States. With that, there are over 40 million different ways to be Black in America. However, regardless of age, geographic location, religious beliefs, socio-economic status, education, or politics, black hair and its resilience are symbols of the African American experience and a connection to the history of the African Diaspora. Whether worn in an afro, braided, twisted, or locked, black hair defined is a phenotypical ancestral bond.

The Prince George's County Human Relations Commission (HRC) advocates for freedom and enforcement of equal civil and human rights within 13 protected classes, including race and personal appearance. By expanding the discrimination definition of race to include hairstyles and texture, this bill prohibits the denial of opportunities and differential treatment that minorities of color may experience in an employment capacity and other protected areas.

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 531** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.