



Office of the Governor

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Gov. Lujan Grisham signs bill banning discrimination based on hair or cultural headdress

SANTA FE – Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham on Monday signed into law measures that prohibit discrimination, discipline or disparate treatment of New Mexico students based on their hair style or cultural or religious headdress.

Companion bills House Bill 29 and Senate Bill 80 – sponsored by House Majority Floor Leader Sheryl Williams Stapleton, Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero, Sen. Harold Pope, Jr., Sen. Linda Lopez, Sen. Benny Shendo, Sen. Shannon Pinto and Sen. Antoinette Sedillo Lopez – add a new section to the Public School Code and Charter School Act preventing school districts and charters from discriminating against any student based on their race or culture with respect to their hairstyle or headdress.

At least seven other states have passed similar anti-discrimination legislation, sometimes referred to as being inspired by the Crown Act.

The governor signed the two identical bills, each of which passed both legislative chambers unanimously.

“This bill is a product of the leadership of Rep. Stapleton, Sen. Pope and others who recognize not only that our multicultural diversity is our strength but that we must actively fight for justice,” said Gov. Lujan Grisham. “I’m proud to enact this law and humbled to call these justice-minded legislative leaders my colleagues.”

“Workplace biases and corporate grooming policies unfairly impact Black women and people of color, not only is this a discrimination issue but an equity issue as it has a social and economic cost,” said Sen. Pope. “SB80 is the most inclusive legislation in the country, inspired by the ‘Crown Act’ the goal is to end discrimination at our public schools, charter schools and workplaces. We must have protections in place that respect all New Mexicans.”

“New Mexicans from a variety of cultures and races wear hairstyles and headdresses as part of their identity or to physically protect their hair,” said House Majority Floor

Leader and lead sponsor Rep. Sheryl Williams Stapleton. "This bill ensures that they are free to do so at school, at work, and in public, without repercussion. Diversity and cultural expressions are cause for celebration."

"All New Mexicans, no matter their race, religion or background, deserve to be treated equally and accepted for who they are," said sponsor Rep. Patricia Roybal Caballero. "Forcing students to conform their natural hairstyles or remove cultural headdresses to simply get an education or participate in school events is unconscionable, yet it has a long history in New Mexico. House Bill 29 will finally right this egregious wrong, ensure all our students are treated equitably, and foster a respectful and open world."

"The passing of this legislation provides a historic impact to Black women in New Mexico, through breaking down barriers present in educational and professional settings," said state Office of African American Affairs Director Amy Whitfield. "The voices we have heard during this legislative session illustrated the impact of racial discrimination based on hair and its compounding effects on potential opportunities. The advocates of this bill should be commended for their articulation of the importance and necessity for this legislation to pass, through their shared experiences on the collective damage sustained through this type of discrimination."

"This bill is long overdue; there is no place for discrimination against students based on race or culture. We must do better to ensure our cultural heritage is respected," said Indian Affairs Secretary Lynn Trujillo. "The passage of this legislation helps to ensure that racial inequities concerning hair and cultural headdresses are no more and that this type of discrimination will no longer be accepted or tolerated in our schools."

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