

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader

House Bill 1444

(Delegate Smith, *et al.*)

Health and Government Operations

Judicial Proceedings

Discrimination - Definition of Race - Hair Texture and Hairstyles

This bill defines “race,” for the purposes of specified laws prohibiting discrimination, as including traits associated with race, including hair texture, afro hairstyles, and protective hairstyles. The bill also defines “protective hairstyle” as a hairstyle that includes braids, twists, and locks.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill does not materially affect State finances or operations, including the workload of the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights.

Local Effect: The bill does not materially affect local government finances or operations,

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: Discrimination based on race is prohibited under specified State laws, including those prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, and places of public accommodation. However, these laws do not specify a definition for race.

Background: In February 2020, Montgomery County’s Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair Act went into effect, making the county the first in the United States to ban discrimination based on hairstyles. The Act prohibits discrimination based on natural hairstyles such as braids, locks, afros, curls, and twists. Similar legislation has been enacted in California, New Jersey, and New York; similar federal legislation has also been introduced.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: SB 531 (Senator Smith, *et al.*) - Judicial Proceedings.

Information Source(s): Maryland Commission on Civil Rights; Department of General Services; Department of Housing and Community Development; Maryland Department of Labor; Maryland Association of Counties; *The New York Times*; Department of Legislative Services

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