

ACT NO. 8553

BILL NO. 34-0147

THIRTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Regular Session

2022

An Act amending the Virgin Islands Code title 10, chapter 1, sections 2 and 3, relating to discrimination on account of race to include discrimination on the basis of hair texture or protective hair style; and amending title 17, chapter 3 relating to education to enact “The Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair Act” or “The Virgin Islands Crown Act”

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WHEREAS, throughout United States history, society has used, in conjunction with skin color, hair texture and hairstyle to classify individuals on the basis of race;

WHEREAS, like one’s skin color, one’s hair has served as a basis of race and national origin discrimination;

WHEREAS, racial and national origin discrimination can and does occur because of longstanding racial and national origin biases and stereotypes associated with hair texture and style;

WHEREAS, people of African descent are routinely deprived of educational and employment opportunities because they are adorned with natural or protective hairstyles in which hair is tightly coiled or tightly curled, or worn in locks, cornrows, twists, braids, Bantu knots, or afros;

WHEREAS, racial and national origin discrimination is reflected in school and workplace policies and practices that bar natural or protective hairstyles commonly worn by people of African descent;

WHEREAS, the Legislature of the Virgin Islands should address the systematic deprivation of educational, employment, and other opportunities on the basis of hair texture and hairstyle that are commonly associated with race or national origin;

WHEREAS, the Legislature intends to mandate that workplace, school and other applicable standards be applied in a nondiscriminatory manner and that the adoption or implementation of grooming requirements that disproportionately impact people of African descent be expressly prohibited;

WHEREAS, the Legislature of the Virgin Islands declares that continuing to enforce a Eurocentric image of professionalism through purportedly race-neutral grooming policies that disproportionately impact people of African descent and exclude them from some workplaces and school programs, or activities is in direct opposition to equal protection and fairness; Now, Therefore,

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:

SECTION 1. This act is known and may be cited as “The Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair Act of 2022”, or “The Virgin Islands Crown Act of 2022”.

SECTION 2. Title 10 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 1 is amended in the following instances:

(a) Section 2 is amended by adding two definitions that read as follows:

“Protective hairstyle” means hair characteristics, hair texture and hairstyles that include but are not limited to, such hairstyles as braids, locks, twists, cornrows, Bantu knots, Afros, and other styles in which the hair is tightly coiled or tightly curled.

“Race” includes traits historically associated with race, including, but not limited to hair texture, hair type or and protective hairstyles.”

(b) Section 3 is amended by adding subsections (h) to read as follows:

“(h) No individual in the Virgin Islands may be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of any program or activity of a college, university, or other postsecondary institution, or a public system of higher education; or an elementary or secondary education system or vocational or career technology education, or other school system; or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity of any school or educational institution, based on race.”

SECTION 3. Title 17 Virgin Islands Code, chapter 3 is amended by adding a section 25 that reads as follows:

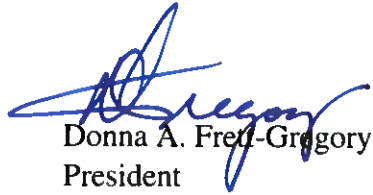
“§ 25. (a) The Virgin Islands Department of Education, Virgin Islands Board of Education, a school district, college, university or school administrator may not create a dress code or policy that prohibits protective hairstyles from being worn in the school during school hours or school events; nor may a student be expelled or in any manner disciplined on the basis of a protective hairstyle worn by the student.

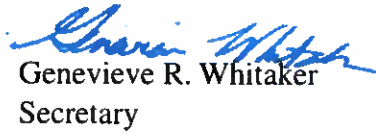
(b) For purposes of this section, the term, “protective hairstyle” includes but is not limited to such hairstyles as braids, locks, twists, cornrows, Bantu knots, afros and other styles in which the hair is tightly coiled or tightly curled.”

Thus passed by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands on March 24, 2022.

Witness our Hands and Seal of the Legislature of the Virgin Islands this 30th Day of March, A.D., 2022.




Donna A. Frett-Grigory
President


Genevieve R. Whitaker
Secretary



Bill No. 34-0147 is hereby approved.

Witness my hand and the Seal of the Government of the United States Virgin Islands at Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, This 1st day of April, 2022 A.D.


Albert Bryan Jr.
Governor