



Department of Fair Employment & Housing

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Dec. 23, 2019
For Immediate Release

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DFEH Settles Race-Based Hairstyle Discrimination Case Against Business Resource Group

LA company CEO agrees to compensate employee whose braids were not welcome at work

Sacramento – The California Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH) has reached a settlement in a workplace race discrimination case against Business Resource Group.

A former employee who worked at Business Resource Group in Hawthorne, California, filed a complaint with DFEH in February 2019, alleging that the company's CEO on three separate occasions harassed her based on her race (African American). The complainant alleged that when she wore her hair naturally curly or in braids the CEO called her "unprofessional," said her appearance was "unacceptable," and asked, "What did you girls do? Did you have a braid meeting over the weekend?" "What are you doing to your hair?" The CEO allegedly told the complainant, "Oh, that looks better," when she wore her hair straight. The comments made complainant so uncomfortable she could not return to work and quit.

The parties engaged in voluntary pre-investigation mediation through the DFEH's Dispute Resolution Division, resulting in a settlement in which the CEO agreed to compensate the complainant and to receive a minimum of two hours of harassment prevention training.

"Stereotypes that equate professionalism with European characteristics unfairly burden Black employees and other employees of color," said DFEH Director Kevin Kish. "California law makes clear that discrimination and harassment based on natural hair texture and protective styles is race-based and unlawful."

On July 3, 2019, Governor Newsom signed the CROWN (Creating a Respectful and Open Workplace for Natural Hair) Act (SB 188), making California the first state in the nation to ban racial discrimination based on natural hair. The CROWN Act extends California's prohibition against race discrimination under the Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA) and Education Code to expressly prohibit discrimination and harassment based on hair style including braids, locks, and twists and hair texture. DFEH Attorney Mediator, Christine Page, mediated the case.

The DFEH is the state agency charged with enforcing California's civil rights laws. The mission of the DFEH is to protect the people of California from unlawful discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations and from hate violence and human trafficking. For more information, visit the DFEH's web site at www.dfeh.ca.gov.

