

Subject: Support for an End to Caste Discrimination
Date: Friday, February 17, 2023 at 4:03:24 PM Pacific Standard Time
From: Amar Shergill <amar@shergilllawfirm.com>
To: LEG_CouncilMembers <council@seattle.gov>
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Attachments: image001.jpg, image002.jpg

CAUTION: External Email

Seattle City Council Members,

I call on the Seattle City Council to pass amendments to the Seattle Municipal Code prohibiting caste discrimination.

Caste cannot exist without discrimination. Caste is harassment, bigotry, oppression and exclusion in education, workplace, housing, and employment across Seattle communities.

The nature of caste discrimination is that it encourages the oppressed to remain silent but our nation is beginning to recognize the true extent of caste discrimination. The distressing tale of illegal sex, labor, and human trafficking of South Asian women to the US from 1986 to 2000 in the [United States v. Lakireddy Bali Reddy](#) and the ongoing [lawsuit against technology giant Cisco](#) in California are two serious examples of caste-based discrimination in the United States.

It was my honor to author [a ban on Caste discrimination](#) in the [California Democratic Party](#) that was supported by a diverse coalition of allies and passed without opposition. Many other universities, civil rights organizations, workers' unions, and even corporations recognize caste and have added it to their respective non-discriminatory policies. [Brandeis University](#), [California State University](#) (CSU), [Harvard Graduate Students Union-United Auto Workers](#) (HGSU-UAW), [Brown University](#), [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People](#) (NAACP), [Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance](#) (APALA), and AFL-CIO, are included in the growing list of institutions that have endorsed caste equity and added caste to their non-discriminatory policies. Recently, Apple & Amazon, among many others, also updated their employee conduct policy to explicitly prohibit caste discrimination.

The State of Washington is home to more than 167,000 people from the South Asian diaspora largely concentrated in the Greater Seattle area. A 2022 news [article](#) noted, "Seattle is one of the cities where caste discrimination *remains a largely hidden and unreported issue.*" The same article quotes a spokesperson from the City of Seattle Office of Civil Rights, who wrote that *"Caste Status is not a recognized protected class in the City of Seattle and if our office were to receive a complaint based solely on caste discrimination, we*

would not be able to investigate it...”

It is imperative that the Seattle City Council include caste as a protected category and empower staff to investigate discrimination claims based on caste. I urge all City Councilmembers to join Councilmember Kshama Sawant in banning caste-based discrimination.

Sincerely,

Amar Shergill

California Democratic Party Executive Board Member and Progressive Caucus Chair

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