

Subject: Letter in Support of Ordinance to Ban Caste-based Discrimination in Seattle City
Date: Thursday, February 16, 2023 at 9:13:56 AM Pacific Standard Time
From: Chopra, Sapna <sapnachopra@fullerton.edu>
To: LEG_CouncilMembers <council@seattle.gov>

CAUTION: External Email

Dear Council Member/s:

We are [Researchers and Critical Educators](#) (RACE) from California State University Fullerton. We are a community of faculty linked by our commitment to promoting excellent scholarship, applied research, and discussion of issues on the topic of race, ethnicity, class, culture, religion, linguistic diversity, disability, gender, and sexual orientation as well as other issues of diversity.

It is in this capacity that we are writing in support of the ordinance to ban caste-based discrimination in Seattle City thereby adding caste as a protected category in Seattle City's anti-discrimination policy.

Casteism is an inter-faith, inter-caste, and international issue. Importantly, it is a civil rights and human rights issue that affects a billion people globally. Having caste as a protected category is an urgent, critical need in legislation that offers protection to diasporic South Asians from Pakistan, Nepal, India, Bangladesh, as well as historically indentured communities in the Caribbean and Fiji. Caste is deeply endemic in the South Asian diaspora and intersects with other civil and human rights issues such as gender, immigration, and domestic violence. Therefore, adding caste as a protected category particularly for working class Seattle citizens protects those who have been historically disenfranchised and continue to face oppression within their communities.

Unfortunately, as is expected with any civil and human rights issue, a small yet vocal number of groups have opposed these protections and engaged in the spreading of disinformation. We strongly encourage you to focus on and support those who are a minority within a minority, lack social and political power, and remain fearful for their well-being and safety, instead of those who hold caste privilege and are not impacted by caste-based discrimination. We stand with partners like Equality Labs who have been long standing partners to many of our service providers around issues of caste equity and have shed necessary light on the trauma of caste in South Asian communities and how we as a field might better support healing around this painful issue. Their research and data around caste exclusion in multiple fields is invaluable for these discussions and we stand unapologetically with Equality Labs and all the organizations of this coalition.

We strongly urge all Council members to outlaw caste-based discrimination making Seattle the first city in the country to do so. This will mark a historic win for all caste oppressed people but also ensure that Seattle continues to be a welcome city for all.

Sincerely,

Researchers and Critical Educators - California State University

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