

Subject: In Support of Caste Anti-Discrimination Ordinance

Date: Saturday, February 18, 2023 at 3:45:48 PM Pacific Standard Time

From: Dubal, Veena <dubalv@uchastings.edu>

To: LEG_CouncilMembers <council@seattle.gov>

CC: Stone, Meredith <Meredith.Stone@seattle.gov>, akscsfba@gmail.com <akscsfba@gmail.com>

CAUTION: External Email

Dear Members of the Seattle City Council:

I write in strong support of Councilmember Sawant's draft ordinance to ban caste discrimination in the city of Seattle. As a legal scholar of employment and a South Asian American intimately familiar with caste hierarchy, discrimination, and violence, I believe it is imperative that such protections exist in jurisdictions across the U.S. This legal protection against caste discrimination at work is a logical and necessary extension of the spirit of federal civil rights laws, including Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. With a growing South Asian American community across the U.S., but particularly in the West and Pacific Northwest, the promise of equal opportunity at work can only be fulfilled if caste discrimination becomes a clear and cognizable legal harm.

The pervasiveness of casteism in South Asia has long permeated diasporic communities in the U.S. Because of their access to education and power, the majority of South Asian-origin people in the U.S. are from privileged castes. To date, the discriminatory experiences of the minority communities--of Dalits and oppressed castes--in professional and social networks have largely been ignored or overlooked. But recently, in response to brave organizing and movement building by these communities, the practices of untouchability and caste discrimination have become better known, prompting action by both U.S. government regulators and university administrators. It is time for municipalities and state governments to follow.

Seattle is known to be a world class city that values diversity and social inclusion. It is also home to a booming technology industry that benefits from the labor of many South Asians and South Asian Americans who carry with them the unjust privileges and stigmas of caste. I commend the City Council on their leadership in addressing these pervasive injustices and strongly urge you to vote in favor of the ordinance.

Please do not hesitate to reach out with questions.

Sincerely,
Veena Dubal

--

Veena Dubal, Ph.D., J.D.

Fellow, Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Stanford University (2022-2023)

Professor of Law

Harry & Lilian Hastings Chair

University of California College of the Law, San Francisco

[SSRN Author Page](#)