

January 25, 2022

Cal State Trustees,  
CSU Chancellor Castro  
CFA President Toomb  
c/o Trustee Secretariat  
401 Golden Shore  
Long Beach, CA 90802  
(562) 951-4020  
[trusteesecretariat@calstate.edu](mailto:trusteesecretariat@calstate.edu)

Dear CSU Board of Trustees, CSU Chancellor Castro, and CFA President Toombs,

We are writing as a collective of Dalit civil rights organization whose members represent the caste oppressed communities in North America. Collectively our organizations have members across the United States and many of our organizations work with students, faculty, and staff who are impacted by caste discrimination in American Institutions.

We want to first express our gratitude for the CSU system for acknowledging the violence we face on a day to day basis as a community. As the Equality Labs survey shares, 1 in 3 Dalit students face some form of discrimination in their educational experience. As many of our members are survivors of this system of exclusion, we can attest to this with members expressing that during their time in universities, they experienced discrimination in housing, microaggressions, slurs, and even sexual harassment, and physical assault. Our organizations are often on the frontlines for addressing caste harm for our community members and we find that many do not report because of the fear of not being heard or that people in power lack the competence to understand these problems.

That is why policies like the addition of caste to the non-discrimination policy matter. Policy change is the first step to building caste competency. We were also thrilled that the California Faculty Association joined the Harvard Graduate Student Union by adding caste as a protected category. Its addition further ensures caste oppressed faculty can be protected as oftentimes, many of our members are afraid to raise caste complaints because of the intimidation and harassment they face from caste privileged peers.

We see that intimidation even now in the bad faith and bigoted arguments coming from a small group of faculty that would derail months long of democratic student, faculty, and community processes. The reality is the people who are opposed to the addition of caste are the same people who have benefited from caste. There is no castelessness--it is simply caste privilege people who are uncomfortable in being in spaces where caste

oppressed people are having the same rights as them. This kind of gaslighting might be new to the CSU system and California Faculty Association administrations, but unfortunately caste oppressed communities have faced this kind of harassment and undermining of our struggle for rights. It is not unlike the communities who are resisting the teaching of America's uncomfortable histories of race and the debates around critical race theory. However uncomfortable these resisters to progress are, *they* are not determining agents of civil rights. The law is. And the state of California has already set the bar high with the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing suing Cisco for casteism. This case has opened other similar institutions like the California Democratic Party who has also added castes. Our civil rights movement will not be denied.

Further, there is no legal basis to their arguments. As the addition of caste does not discriminate or interfere with any other categories, it simply provides protections for individuals who would otherwise be victims of intentional discriminatory conduct motivated by caste. It is not members of any one faith that are the targets of such measures. Rather the targets, and only targets, are those who discriminate against another person due to the unchosen trait of being born into a certain caste. As such, these anti-caste measures do not infringe on religious beliefs but only serve to protect against unacceptable discriminatory practices.

The hard reality is that most of the opposing faculty members are incensed at the hard-fought access to decision making that Dalit Americans have won after many years of witnessing and organizing. For decades, these have been the exclusive domains of "upper caste" professors and academics: from running South Asian departments, to leading engineering schools, to homogeneously representing 'South Asians' in cultural spaces. Thus their intense anger and perceived hurt about even the minimal of safeguards resemble that of a true bully, claiming and believing to be themselves victims of the vulnerable.

In conclusion, we urge the CSU Board of Trustees to stay the course, ratify the collective bargaining agreements of the California Faculty Association, and confirm the addition of caste. In doing so, the California State University system joins the California Democratic Party, Brandeis University, Colby College, University of California, Davis, Harvard University, and other institutions who are supporting the rights of the caste-oppressed by acknowledging caste discrimination and changing their policies to reflect this reality.

Thank you,

[AANA \(Ambedkar Association of North America\)](#)

[ABAT \(Ambedkar Buddhist Association of Texas\)](#)

[AIC \(Ambedkar International Center\)](#)

AIM (Ambedkar International Mission)

[Ambedkar Times](#)

[BSAC \(Boston south asian coalition\)](#)

[BSG \(Boston Study Group\)](#)

Begmpura Cultural Society of NY

[CAPI \(Coalition of Americans for Pluralism in India\)](#)

CSIA (Coalition of Seattle Indian Americans)

[Desh Doaba](#)

[FFEI \(Friends for Education International\)](#)

International Bahujan Organization

International Boddhisativa Guru Ravidass Organization inc

[ICDR \(International Commission for Dalit Rights\)](#)

Guru Ravidas Sabha, Bay area, California

GNF (Global NRI Forum)

[PASC \(Periyar Ambedkar Study Circle\)](#)

[Periyar International USA](#)

[Shri Guru Ravidas Temple](#)