National Organization Joint Statement Endorsing California Proposition 16

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 220 national organizations to promote and protect the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States, and the 70 undersigned organizations representing civil rights and education, we write in support of California Proposition 16 (Prop. 16). By reinstating affirmative action in public higher education, Prop. 16 will afford all Californians equal opportunities to fully participate in society – combating discrimination and prejudice against women and people of color.

As national organizations, we have tracked the negative impact affirmative action bans have had on women, African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans, especially in California. Prop. 16 provides an opportunity to rectify that negative impact and ensure that all communities have equal access to opportunities in public higher education. California’s future as a state, and our future success as a nation, depends on educating and engaging all people – whether they are White, Black, Asian American, Native American, or Latino – to be prepared to participate in civic life. Prop. 16 would do this by ensuring equitable access to higher education.

Higher education still remains the surest path to social and economic mobility, which is why it is critically important for communities that have historically been excluded from these opportunities to be fully and affirmatively included. Without full inclusion in higher education opportunities, people of color are being locked out from fully participating in the economy. The 133 percent pay disparity between college graduates and non-graduates demonstrates the significant benefits access to higher education confers. Additionally, it is important for colleges to reflect the diversity of our society.

California, as one of the most diverse states in the country, has a natural advantage in ensuring a diverse student body. Public colleges and universities in California should reflect its residents on their campuses and not the 2 and 3 percent of Black students represented at University of California-Berkeley and University of California-Los Angeles, respectively – nor the representation of Latino students at less than half their percentage in California high schools. In a recent study, researchers found that the ban on affirmative action in public

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4 Based on calculations from California Department of Education and The University of California at a Glance.
university admissions led to a decline in systemwide underrepresented group enrollment by at least 12 percent.\(^5\) This decline in enrollment did not only lead to fewer students from underrepresented groups being enrolled in selective public institutions, it also led to inequitable outcomes in degree attainment and salary stagnation. Proposition 209, which would be repealed by Prop. 16, caused a decline in the total number of high-earning early-30s African American and Latino Californians by at least 3-6 percent.\(^6\) Moreover, not only does affirmative action promote equality in college admissions and lead to better wages for historically marginalized communities, it also benefits all the students who attend college and better prepares them for their future success in society by giving them an academic experience based in the diversity of our society.

Now, more than ever, it is important for California to lead the country in ensuring fair access to public higher education. Proposition 209, California’s ban on affirmative action, ended up being unfortunately replicated in eight other states. Prop. 16 is the chance to reverse that trend. While we are a nation of states, California’s influence on the rest of the country is difficult to overstate, and California must seize this opportunity to show how great the benefits can be when a state chooses to embrace its diversity and be inclusive of all its residents.

Sincerely,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
A. Philip Randolph Institute
AAPI Women Lead
ACCEPT: Admissions Community Cultivating Equity & Peace Today
Agency for Humanity
American Association for Access, Equity and Diversity
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)
American Federation of Teachers
Americans for Democratic Action (ADA)
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)
Asian Americans Advancing Justice
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO
Association for the Study of Higher Education
Association on Higher Education And Disability (AHEAD)
Autistic Reality
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Center for American Progress


\(^6\) Ibid.
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Center for Responsible Lending
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Coalition for a Diverse Harvard
Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU)
Coalition of Labor Union Women
Complete College America
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (DREDF)
EduColor
Equal Justice Society
Excelencia in Education
Feminist Majority Foundation
Girls Inc.
Hispanic Federation
IDRA (Intercultural Development Research Association)
Impact Fund
Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)
Japanese American Citizens League
Justice in Aging
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA)
MALDEF (Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund)
NAACP
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.
National Association for College Admission Counseling
National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO)
National Center for Fair & Open Testing (FairTest)
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Center for Youth Law
National Council of Jewish Women
National Education Association
National Equality Action Team (NEAT)
National Hispanic Media Coalition
National Immigration Law Center
National Organization for Women
National Urban League
National Women's Law Center
New America Higher Education Program
OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates
People For the American Way
People’s Collective for Justice and Liberation
Self-Help Federal Credit Union
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
Teach For America
Teach Plus
The Advocacy Institute
The Education Trust
The Institute for College Access and Success (TICAS)
The Princeton Review Foundation
UnidosUS
Union for Reform Judaism
Veterans Education Success
Young Invincibles