



Alliance of South Asians Taking Action
17 Walter U Lum Place, San Francisco, CA 94108
www.asata.org

February 13, 2023

ATTN Seattle City Council:

We are writing you as members of the Alliance of South Asians Taking Action (ASATA) to strongly encourage you to continue to support the resolution calling for the inclusion of caste in the anti-discrimination policy for the City of Seattle. ASATA was founded in 2000 and is a Bay Area advocacy group that has been working for over 20 years to empower Bay Area South Asian communities to end violence, oppression, racism, and exploitation within and against our diverse communities. The majority of our 40+ members and 500+ volunteers are Indian American of Hindu descent and from privileged caste backgrounds, and many of our members and leaders have community ties in Seattle.

We strongly support the City of Seattle's efforts to protect our community members and stand up to caste-based discrimination, and we urge you to pass the ordinance for the Inclusion of Caste in Anti-Discrimination Policy to ensure Seattle is a welcoming city for all. Casteism is an inter-faith, intercaste, international issue. It is a civil rights and human rights issue. This is not a religious issue, as that is a distraction. Adding caste as a protected category will support people ALL over South Asia: Pakistan, Nepal, India, Bangladesh, indentured communities in Caribbean and Fiji.

As a group with majority privileged membership, we are deeply dismayed at far-right voices have been arguing that caste discrimination is so central to our identity that to oppose it is to oppose Indians and Hindus. This is absolutely false and is tantamount arguing that if you oppose racism, you oppose the United States. Caste is rampant in workplaces, housing, universities, and in our communities. Over 1 in 4 Dalits experience physical/verbal assault, 1 in 3 experience discrimination in universities, and 2 out of 3 face discrimination in workplaces. Adding caste protections will allow Dalits and caste-oppressed people and workers to feel safe reporting incidents of discrimination about their experiences without fear of backlash. This historic ordinance is critical for the safety and well-being of caste-oppressed people in Seattle.

To reject this ordinance would mean failing to protect Seattle's caste-oppressed community members and erasing the voices of dominant-caste allies such as us and our community. The passage of this ordinance will expand the dignity and rights for all impacted people in the City of Seattle.

Make history by voting YES on this ordinance.

In Solidarity,
Swati Rayasam (Co-Coordinator)
Sabiha Basrai (Co-Coordinator)
Anirvan Chatterjee (Co-Coordinator)
The Alliance of South Asians Taking Action (ASATA)