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Sent: Thursday, February 16, 2023 5:02 PM
To: LEG_CouncilMembers
Subject: Anonymous testimony of workplace caste discrimination in Seattle area

CAUTION: External Email

Hi all,

I am writing in support of the ordinance to ban caste discrimination in Seattle.

In this context, I would like to report what a friend of mine who wishes to remain anonymous shared about the discrimination he experienced in a tech company that he chooses not to name in the Seattle area.

I hope this provides further evidence of discrimination to you.

Raghav

Caste discrimination in the workplace in Dec 2020

I was born in a Dalit family in India and my parents were first-generation high school graduates. They both worked in the government departments and rose in their respective professions that liberated them from the traditional occupations of their ancestors as agricultural laborers. They brought me and my three siblings with utmost care and taught us the importance of education. They motivated all of us to pursue education to the highest levels and I did doctoral studies in social sciences and completed master's in management information systems in India. Needless to say this was possible because of the affirmative (reservation) policy enshrined in the constitution of India that enabled the oppressed communities to enter into modern education and employment. However, when I immigrated to the United States of America on an H1B visa in 2000, that was the greatest moment of liberation for me as a Dalit. In India Dalits are negatively portrayed as government children who have unfairly grabbed the fruits of education through reservations without any merit. Escape from the caste stigma enabled me to move forward and thrive and succeed in my professional journey in the US. I seized every opportunity that came in my way to prove my professional strength in the field of technology and in business as a leader. My personal and professional drive to achieve more landed me at the ABCD company in March 2018. While excelling my profession, I also completed an MBA to prove that even without affirmative (reservation) policy I can succeed in life.

However, long forgotten caste stigma came back to haunt, it made me realize one might escape from India but not from the caste of your birth. For almost twenty years I never worked under an Indian origin manager in the US until March 2019. In the beginning, the manager at ABCD Company with offices in Seattle recognized my work and gave a raise and bonus within the first 4 months. He provided a positive feedback on Connects for the first end of the financial year and followed it with another excellent feedback for the next 6 months before he left to another department. After that, the skip level manager also continued his positive feedback for another 3 months. In contrast to previous managers reviews, the newly hired Indian manager who hails from upper caste background downgraded my work to a poor year-end performance review with no bonus and no raise that pushed me into a category of Insufficient Result. However, not completing the Technical Skilling requirements for certifications on time was the reasons cited for the poor performance on my review and also not making proactive efforts to help maintain data in CRM system of record for success engagements. Even though I completed the TS requirement with only a single day delay with a notification in advance,

he did not demonstrate any evidence for the second reason he claimed as well. The review was only for the last four months of his supervision contrasts to the reviews of two previous managers of past eight months of that financial year. The new manager was moved to a different group after the review and I moved to work under a new manager who understood the anomalies in my situation with empathy and persuaded me not go in the direction of protest. Instead, he appreciated my hard work and recommended an incredible 130% of bonus along with a raise for the impacts that I demonstrated with customer engagements.

I do not have any explanation other than caste discrimination to explain what happened. Given my experience as a Dalit who bore the stigma of caste in India, there is no doubt that I was treated as a Dalit by privileged caste Hindu manager who has, not only devalued my work efficiency and proved to be an affront to my dignity as a human as it only affected my financial situation through a bonus cut for a simple reason of not passing a certification but also caused enormous mental agony that took me back to the oppressed existence of our ancestors. Privileged caste Hindus in India believe that people from marginalized backgrounds are unworthy and lack any merit as they were given access to education and employment through the affirmative/reservation policy. This bitter experience still haunts me every day, I also want to state that I do not want to make this as a personal issue; I think the ordinance being proposed in the city of Seattle is exactly the right response.