



September 29, 2020

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## **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-college graduates in California demonstrates the significant benefits access to higher education confers.<sup>1</sup> 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<sup>2</sup> and University of California-Los Angeles,<sup>3</sup> respectively – nor the representation of Latino students at less than half their percentage in California high schools.<sup>4</sup> In a recent study, researchers found that the ban on affirmative action in public

<sup>1</sup> Allana Akhtar & Kiersz, A. "[College Grads Still Earn More Than Workers with No University Degree. This Map Shows the States with the Widest Salary Gaps.](#)" Business Insider. July 15, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> National Center for Education Statistics. "[College Navigator – University of California-Berkeley.](#)" Fall 2018.

<sup>3</sup> National Center for Education Statistics. "[College Navigator – University of California-Los Angeles.](#)" Fall 2018.

<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> 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

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<sup>5</sup> Zach Bleemer. "[The impact of Proposition 209 and access-oriented UC admissions policies on underrepresented UC applications, enrollment, and long-run student outcomes.](#)" UC Office of the President. August 2020.

<sup>6</sup> 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