**Support for Anti-caste Proposal**

December xx, 20xx

Dear [**Name of Organization/Person]**,

We are writing to you as members of [**Your Organization]** to strongly encourage you to support a proposal that recognizes caste-based discrimination and adds it to the non-discrimination policy of UMass Amherst. [**You can put information about your organization here.]** As students, we believe that we have a moral duty to support caste-oppressed people and to call on the University administration to offer institutional safeguards for so-called lower-caste people through this new protected category. The Massachusetts Society of Professors (MSP) recently endorsed the proposal, which requests the UMass administration to acknowledge the existence of discrimination and prejudice associated with caste in the United States (US) and to include caste as a protected category in the non-discrimination policy of the institution. This is an important step towards ending caste-based discrimination at the campus and safeguarding the rights of caste-oppressed people.

Caste-based discrimination is evident in the US institutions. In 2018, a survey by Equality Labs (non-profit organization) found that 1 in 4 Dalit (stigmatized caste identity) Americans experienced verbal or physical assault because of their caste, and 1 in 3 Dalit students reported experiencing discrimination during their education. Furthermore, 41 percent of Dalit students surveyed reported facing discrimination and microaggressions in US educational institutions as well as in the greater South Asian diaspora. Casteism in the US has been documented by several reputable sources including [NPR](https://www.npr.org/2020/10/14/923736245/caste-arrives-in-silicon-valley), [The Atlantic,](https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/11/india-america-caste/620583/) [Al Jazeera](https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2020/12/15/it-is-time-to-talk-about-caste-in-pakistan-and-pakistani-diaspora) and [Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/06/09/social-realities-of-indian-americans-results-from-2020-indian-american-attitudes-survey-pub-84667). This overwhelming body of evidence cannot be overlooked in good faith. In 2020, Isabel Wilkerson in her national bestseller book, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents,* highlights the need to make the fight against casteism a salient issue in institutional policies.

Much like racial justice, anti-caste intervention requires institutional support, and UMass Amherst would not be alone in taking this much-needed step. Recently, [Brandeis University](https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/12/20/university-adds-caste-nondiscrimination-policy), [University of California, Davis](https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/uc-davis-adds-caste-anti-discrimination-policy-81266137), [Colby College](https://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2021/10/15/colby-college-bans-discrimination-based-caste) and [Harvard University](https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/harvard-adds-caste-bias-protections-graduate-student-workers-rcna7279) explicitly acknowledged the importance of declaring caste-oppressed people as a protected group. This proposal will not result in discrimination against any group or South Asian communities, but will instead extend the protection of rights for those who are not covered in the current non-discrimination policy of UMass Amherst yet continues to face discrimination based on caste identities which have been imported from South Asia. We urge the leadership of UMass Amherst to accept this proposal to join their fellow universities to fight against caste-based oppression and casteism in higher education. We also request the UMass authority to listen to the voices of the caste-oppressed people and include caste-based discrimination in the campus climate assessment. We are optimistic that UMass Amherst will rise to the occasion and set a historic precedent as the first public university on the east coast to add caste in its non-discrimination policy.

Thank you for your time, and for working to end discrimination on the UMass Amherst campus. We urge the UMass Amherst authority to safeguard the rights of oppressed people, and accept the proposal.

In solidarity,

[**Your Organization]**