

## Cynthia Telles Endorses Repeal of Ban on Affirmative Action in California

Global English (Middle East and North Africa Financial Network)

October 30, 2020 Friday

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Length: 692 words

### Body

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LOS ANGELES, CA / ACCESSWIRE / October 30, 2020 / The COVID-19 pandemic has given more attention to the long-standing problem of disparities in health care in low-income communities of color. Health experts have struggled to address the fact that people in these communities are disproportionately impacted by social determinants that impact their health, receive fewer health care services, encounter barriers when trying to access health care, and face difficulty in finding health care providers. The pandemic has shown these problems to a much wider audience, as the virus's severity and death rates among Black and Latino people have been much higher than among whites. "Fixing health disparities experienced by underserved communities is a complex challenge with no single solution," said Dr. Cynthia Telles, Community Health Committee chair for the Kaiser Foundation Health Plan and Hospitals Boards of Directors.

"One of the approaches is to build a more diverse and inclusive health care workforce. Our nation currently lacks diversity in health care professionals, including but not limited to physicians and mental health care providers. "Patients typically respond better when they form a trusted connection with their medical and mental health providers. Those connections can be formed in many ways, including when people in underrepresented communities see themselves reflected in the diverse makeup of their care teams, physicians, and therapists. But the ability of California health care organizations to recruit and retain health care professionals who are experienced, educated, and trained in diverse environments - while critical to delivering equitable and culturally competent care - is very difficult because of the small number of health care professionals from diverse communities graduating from California state colleges and universities. Nearly 25 years ago, California put in place a ban on affirmative action, becoming only one of nine states that prohibit any consideration of race as a tool to fight discrimination in university admissions, state hiring, and state contracting. The ban has had a significant impact on California's ability to produce Black and Latino health care professionals. Latinos make up over half of our state's public school students but just 25 percent of the University of California undergraduate students, and roughly only 6 percent of practicing physicians. Research by an economist at the University of California Berkeley found that the ban may have dissuaded more than 1,000 Black and Latino students from even applying to the UC system every year. Experts at the University of California Los Angeles School of Medicine concluded that the ban significantly cut the number of Latino UC medical school graduates. A measure on this November's ballot would repeal the California ban on affirmative action. If Proposition 16 passes, state entities - including public colleges and universities - will once again be allowed to consider race, sex, ethnicity, or national origin in college admissions,

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hiring, and state contracting. Its passage would not allow racial or gender quotas, which have been illegal since 1978. & quot;If we can ensure California & #39;s public universities are accessible to a diverse future health care workforce, comprised of people who are as diverse as the communities we serve, we can go a long way toward reducing health disparities, & quot; said Dr. Cynthia Telles . & quot;I strongly believe that the passage of Proposition 16 will help us improve health outcomes for everyone in our communities. & quot;There are many other reasons to support Proposition 16 , including its positive effect on equity in-state jobs and promotions and reducing wage gaps. It will help small businesses in California owned by women and people of color compete more fairly against bigger, wealthier companies for the more than 600,000 state government contracts awarded each year.

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**Load-Date:** December 3, 2020

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