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Ms. Amy Kim
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AEJPol-2024-0489 "The Effects of Prohibiting Marriage Bars: The Case of U.S. Teachers"

Dear Ms. Kim:

Thank you for submitting your paper AEJPol-2024-0489 "The Effects of Prohibiting Marriage Bars: The Case of U.S. Teachers" to be considered for publication at the *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*. I sent your paper to four expert reviewers. I have now heard back from them. The reviewer reports are enclosed. I have also read your paper with great interest.

Unfortunately, the news from the referees is not good. All four referees find raise significant concerns with the paper. Three out of four recommend passing on the paper and one did not make a recommendation although noted in their cover letter that they "have major doubts about the fit of the article with the journal. I have decided to follow the reviewers' recommendation and reject the paper. I like the idea to examine the labor market impacts of prohibiting marriage bars in the US. But ultimately, I did not find a clear reason to overrule the recommendation from the expert referees and so I have decided to pass on this nice paper.

Let me briefly summarize the reviewers' letters. R1 finds your paper to be interesting and well executed. However, R1 does not think it goes far enough to shed light on whether discrimination against married women still occurs in some countries. In terms of the empirics, R1 finds your diff-in-diff strategy to be somewhat limited since you only can observe outcomes measured at fairly long discrete intervals. R1 did not choose a formal recommendation.

R2 believes your paper addresses an important topic but ultimately finds the contribution to be too narrow relative to the broad literature on banning employer discrimination. R2 recommends rejection at *AEJ Policy*.

R3 finds the paper topic to be slightly narrow in scope for *AEJ Policy* and raises concerns about the execution of empirics. While R3 recommends

rejection at *AEJ Policy*, he/she mentions that a suitably revised version of the paper could be a great fit at *JOLE*.

R4 finds the paper to be interesting and well-written. However, R4 raises substantial concerns about the execution of the empirics (exogeneity of policy reforms and conducting analysis at county level and issues related to migration and inference). R4 also does not think the paper engages enough with the prior literature and is unclear about the main novel insights. R4 recommends rejection at *AEJ Policy*.

Unfortunately, there just is not enough enthusiasm here for it to make sense to move forward with your paper at *AEJ Policy*. For what it's worth, I think the reviewers have clearly engaged with the paper and offer excellent comments in their reports. I hope these comments are helpful as you revise the paper for another outlet. The two main comments that I recommend focusing on are 1) engaging more with the prior literature and clarifying the nature of the contribution and 2) improving the empirics. In terms of the latter, this could include using more conventional measures of labor force participation (LFP), doing more to describe data and sample (and why Black women are excluded), exploring robustness to conducting the analysis at the state level, showing results separately for North Carolina and Kentucky, doing more to explore exogeneity of the reforms, and considering a synthetic diff-in-diff estimator which relaxes the parallel trends assumption and could address concerns related to pre-trends.

In terms of where to submit next, I think a suitably revised paper that addresses these core concerns of the reviewers could potentially be a better fit at a specialized labor journal, such as *Journal of Labor Economics*.

While I understand this news will be disappointing, please keep in mind that we receive many strong submissions but can only publish less than 8 percent of them. Consequently, we reluctantly must reject many nice papers such as yours. I wish you all the best in continuing your work in this area and thank you for considering *AEJ Policy* for the publication of your interesting work. I hope you continue to keep *AEJ Policy* in mind in the future for all your policy-relevant work like this.

Sincerely,

Prof. Kory Kroft
Coeditor, *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*