

## **THE SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL VOTED 6-1 TO PASS LANDMARK BILL ON TUESDAY, EFFECTIVELY BANNING CASTE DISCRIMINATION IN SEATTLE**

SEATTLE, WA (February 21, 2020)

The Seattle City Council voted today to pass a landmark ordinance to ban caste discrimination in Seattle City.

The legislation, introduced by Councilmember Kshama Sawant, outlaws caste-based discrimination. This historic decision will have far-reaching implications for the oppressed castes in the States, and everywhere that the evils of caste have spread.

“We thank Councilmember Kshama Sawant for sponsoring the ordinance and her advocacy on behalf of the oppressed castes and organizations representing them. We, along with our partner organizations – Coalition of Seattle Indian-Americans, Ambedkar King Study Circle, Ambedkar Association of North America and Equality Labs – had worked closely with Councilmember Kshama Sawant to help draft this legislation,” said Ram Kumar, President, Ambedkar International Centre.

Over the last two years, the Ambedkar International Center has championed caste equity and justice for the caste-oppressed through our policy and advocacy efforts including being an amicus curiae in the Cisco caste discrimination case and launching the policy initiative to add caste as a protected category in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The efforts of the Ambedkar International Centre were joined by a dynamic and resilient collective of more than 170 human and civil rights groups, faith communities and other non-governmental organizations, as well as experts, academics, advocates and dynamic leaders on the ground in Seattle.

“Together, we built a movement of organizations and individuals, endorsing and advancing the ordinance, informing and mobilizing people. We would like to thank MAPS-AMEN, in particular, and the Ravidassia community for their colossal support and tireless work in raising awareness and engaging the organizations and stakeholders to join the coalition to achieve this victory. We would also like to thank our policy consultant Sumit Anand for his guidance and expertise throughout the campaign. We thank all the supporters who submitted testimony today, and everyone who previously provided verbal or written comment to the Council,” added Kumar.

“We are grateful and would like to acknowledge John Doe from the Cisco lawsuit, whose revolutionary actions, despite facing all odds stacked against him, brought the issue of caste discrimination in the tech industry and within the South Asian diaspora to a point where it can no longer be denied. This movement has stepped up on his labor, sacrifice and bravery,” said Anil Wagde, Spokesperson, Ambedkar International Centre.

“Seattle has paved the way for social change, justice and equality. We hope that the rest of the country will follow the suit soon. We are now one step closer to an egalitarian world,” added Anil Wagde. “I congratulate and appreciate the Seattle City Council for this historic step and standing by the caste oppressed. It is applaudable that the Council did not fall to the fabricated threats and tales told by right wing groups.”

For more information about the legislation, including letters of support and the advocacy campaign, please contact –

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