

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

Bill: **SJ003/HJ004 Joint Resolution 3 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion - The American Dream**

Submitted by: Dr. Nicole Hollywood

Position: **FAVORABLE**

Greetings. My name is Dr. Nicole Hollywood. I am a professor at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, where I teach a signature general education course on Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. I am submitting this testimony today in my personal capacity in strong support of this Joint Resolution.

DEI is a framework that aims to create more inclusive and welcoming environments by removing systematic barriers to resources and opportunities. Overcoming legacies of colonization, racialization, and other forms of oppression and subjugation are core to achieving the American Dream and building a Maryland where all individuals, regardless of race, religion, national origin, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation, age, or disability status have the opportunity to contribute is foundational to ensuring that no one is left behind.

DEI isn't about putting unqualified people in jobs or providing opportunities to people because of gender, ethnicity, race, age, sexual orientation, etc. It's about availing opportunities to individuals—because they are highly qualified regardless of gender, ethnicity, race, age, sexual preference, etc.

Conservative attacks on DEI often ignore the empirical evidence supporting the benefits of DEI initiatives, such as improved engagement, greater innovation, and increased overall performance.

DEI is about welcoming people in and removing the unconscious and sometimes conscious biases that impact historically marginalized people because when you leave the door open for everyone to have an opportunity, you get a deeper, more qualified pool of people and ideas.

DEI is often mischaracterized as "reverse discrimination" in situations where white people believe they are negatively stereotyped or discriminated against because of their whiteness. This erroneous claim ignores a core ingredient of racism and discrimination- power. DEI seeks to rebalance that power and ensure that those who have been historically disempowered or deprived of equal opportunities simply because of their identities are given a fair and equitable chance to participate and succeed in all aspects of society. This does not in any way equate to discriminating against historically dominant groups.

DEI policies and practices are critical to our LGBTQIA+ community and, more specifically, our QTBIPOC community, which is diverse in composition and often represented by many intersecting historically marginalized identities facing compounding disparities.

By affirming Maryland's commitment to DEI, the Maryland General Assembly will be sending a powerful message that all individuals are valued and deserve the chance to achieve what they themselves define as success and fulfillment through hard work and determination

My students are facing an uncertain future with tremendous trepidation, and they are watching the actions of our leaders. By passing this resolution, you will be offering them some comfort during these harrowing times by enshrining the truism that "our highest accomplishments as a state and nation have been achieved when we harnessed the strengths of all people, regardless of their identities, to overcome our greatest challenges."

Resources

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