SB-82.04
“Caste as a Protected Class Bill”
(Bill to establish caste as a protected class within the ASOSU statutes)

SUMMARY
This bill seeks to add caste as a protected class by amending Title IX of the ASOSU statutes, which currently does not address caste. Caste is an oppressive structure in South Asian society that has existed for 1500 years. By taking this measure, students in the US will be protected from caste based discrimination. This action to protect caste has already been instituted at universities and companies across the country.

WHEREAS Caste is not mentioned in this article of the Constitution. Castes are defined as rigid social strata that are characterized by hereditary transmission of lifestyle, occupation, and social status. It is a structure of oppression that has existed in South Asian society for over 1500 years.

WHEREAS The four major groups of castes include Brahmins (priests or teachers), Kshatriyas (kings, warriors), Vaishyas (merchants), and Shudras (peasants), which is considered the oppressed group. The most marginalized groups outside of the caste system include the Dalits (outcasts) who were formerly known as “untouchables” and the Adivasis (indigenous people).

WHEREAS Caste discrimination is an issue since it enables the exploitation of a group of people based on characteristics. For caste, discrimination is based on skin color and birth origin. Caste has differences from race, as it has a religious basis and draws connections between skin color, purity, and profession. Caste-oppressed people often have darker skin.

WHEREAS Addressing caste discrimination is imperative as it is prevalent among the South Asian diaspora in the US. Equality Labs released data from a community driven survey conducted in 2016, which presents the first evidence of Caste discrimination in the US. Here are some key findings and statistics:

- One in three Dalit students report being discriminated against during their education.
- 60% of Dalits report experiencing Caste-based derogatory jokes or comments.
- 40% of Dalits and 14% of Shudra respondents were made to feel unwelcome at their place of worship because of their Caste.

WHEREAS Caste discrimination has also been prevalent in the workplace. In 2020, California’s Department of Fair Employment and Housing filed a lawsuit against US-based technology company Cisco Systems after an employee from the Dalit caste argued that some of his upper-caste Indian Americans had discriminated against him based on his caste. This sparked a collection of testimonials detailing incidences of oppression on the basis of caste. Additionally, very recently, Google canceled a DEI talk on “Caste Bias” which led to the resignation of Tanuja Gupta, a senior manager at Google News.
WHEREAS The 2020 caste discrimination case of [California’s Department of Fair Employment vs CISCO](#) clearly demonstrates that anti-discrimination policies are necessary. Just like with any other form of discrimination, many caste-based discrimination incidents are not reported officially in the workplace.

WHEREAS Recognizing that caste discrimination is an issue, universities, unions, and other organizations/governing bodies across the country have already taken action to prohibit caste discrimination, as shown by these events:

- Recently, California State University’s board unanimously voted (22-0) to include *caste* as a protected class.
- Earlier in December 2021, Harvard University’s graduate student union succeeded in their negotiations with the administration, to include *caste* in their contracts. Other institutes of higher education that have included caste as a protected class are Colby College and Brandeis University.
- Even more recently, the constitution of the Graduate Union of Oregon State University, the [Coalition of Graduate Employees (CGE)](#) ratified a constitutional amendment adding *caste* as a protected class.

WHEREAS Addressing the protection of caste based discrimination is vital at OSU, even though there have been no incidences to date that have been recorded, for a number of reasons:

- Any form of discrimination *needs* to be addressed to create inclusive spaces. This is especially true in a country like the US, which is an international hub for students and workers.
- Corvallis and other cities in Oregon such as Eugene and Portland have steadily rising South Asian populations. Portland is a major technological hub, while Corvallis and Eugene are bustling university towns.
- Protecting caste based discrimination is a safeguard measure that must be taken to guarantee freedom from this form of oppression. Although it may not seem necessary at first glance, adding the language to our Constitution can only be helpful.

**BE IT HEREBY ENACTED BY THE ASOSU THAT:**

*Title IX §2 Additional Protections Against Discrimination* shall be added as follows;

A. The ASOSU Constitution prevents discrimination within the organization on “...the basis of ability, age, color, ethnicity, gender identity/expression, marital status, national origin, parental status, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, citizenship status, or veteran status in any of its policies, procedures, or practices.” In addition to those enumerated identities, the ASOSU shall not discriminate in hiring practices, employee interactions within the workplace, and reporting practices/standards in incidences of discrimination on the basis of any of the following identities:

1. Caste
2. Socioeconomic Class
BE IT HEREBY ORDERED BY THE ASOSU THAT UPON PASSAGE:

This bill be sent to:
Matteo Paola, ASOSU President
Sierra Young, ASOSU Vice President
Madelyn Neuschwander, ASOSU Speaker of the House
Joe Page, ASOSU SFC Chair
Leslie Schacht Drey, ASOSU Faculty Advisor and Associate Dean of Students
Jenni Allemann, Acting Assistant Director of Student Governance

Authored (as introduced) by:
Sahana Shah, ASOSU Speaker Pro Tempore
of the House of Representatives

Sponsored (as introduced) by:
Xander Robertson, ASOSU President Pro
Tempore of the Senate
Kaitlyn Kim, ASOSU Senator
Adie Rang, ASOSU Representative

Confirmation of passage:
Sierra Young, ASOSU Vice-President and
President of the Senate

Signature: ____________________________
Date: ______7/26/22____

Madelyn Neuschwander, ASOSU Speaker of
the House

Signature: ____________________________
Date: 8/01/22

Approval or veto by the ASOSU President:

Matteo Paola, ASOSU President

Signature: ____________________________
Date: 8/01/22

Approved
Vetoed