

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact Information:

Madi Gregory || 812-679-7524
communications@cplioindiana.org**Ahead of Senate Vote on Anti-DEI Bill in Education, Indiana Coalitions Sound Alarm on Censorship & Discrimination***Republican-led S.B. 289 absorbed S.B. 235 narrowly before its 2nd reading, rendering 235 amendments obsolete according to 'germane' rule*

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indiana Senate is set to vote Thursday on Senate Bill 289, 'Nondiscrimination in employment and education.' This bill regurgitates proposed federal, anti-DEI legislation and would impact state agencies, school corporations, and universities by increasing the administrative burden for nondiscrimination programs, prohibiting requiring certain kinds of training, and eliminating their DEI programs and practices. Additionally, if enacted, this bill would limit how companies who receive state contracts can pay for DEI training and limit DEI programs at certain health organizations.

In a last-minute, legislative sleight-of-hand, the Indiana Senate merged S.B. 235 into S.B. 289, creating a single sweeping bill that eliminates DEI programs, censors discussions on race and gender, and shuts down efforts to address systemic discrimination. By invoking procedural rules, they silenced amendments for S.B. 235, forcing the Senate into an all-or-nothing vote on a radical censorship measure.

During discussion, Senator Shelli Yoder condemned the merger, stating: "It is a bad precedent to take a bill and amend it into another bill when other amendments addressing both were already proposed," Senator Yoder explained. "The amendments for 235 will now most likely never be heard and we wanted to be able to debate both policies and good policies for the state of Indiana."

Senator Andrea Hunley, who proposed amendments to make the bill less burdensome on teachers, implored her Republican colleagues to hear the extremism of the bill as written. "Our educators would have to post all instructional and curriculum materials that deal with nondiscrimination, diversity, equity, inclusion, race, ethnicity, sex, and bias - which are not defined in this bill - already causing confusion."

Senator Hunley continued by citing an example of an existing state standard in Indiana.

One of the required lessons in high school History is to be able to describe and assess President Benjamin Harrison's contributions to national policies on environmental protections, business regulations, immigration, and civil rights... How can you teach that standard without talking about race?

This misguided piece of legislation would impact a wide range of Hoosier community members, including faculty, staff, and students of universities, school corporations and charters, as well as employees of state agencies. The choice to combine S.B. 235 and S.B. 289 shut Hoosier citizens' out of the civic process, with many of the constituents opposing the legislation citing concerns over extreme censorship the bill would cause in the state's struggling education system.

"Erasing discussions of systemic inequality dismantles efforts across Indiana to move toward inclusive, culturally responsive environments for our youth, perpetuating negative representations of our history and hides uncomfortable truths," Meisha Wide, Executive Director of the Children's Policy and Law Initiative of Indiana (CPLI) said. "It is a blatant

attempt to take Indiana backward by silencing the voices that support marginalized members of our community.”

“The bill combines the worst aspects of its predecessors - it’s not about fairness or neutrality—this is state-sanctioned censorship,” Dr. Russ Skiba, leader of University Alliance for Racial Justice (UARJ) added. “Banning discussions about systemic racism and oppression sends a clear message from lawmakers to their constituents: they do not want an informed, inclusive, or honest Indiana.”

States that have passed similar laws—like Florida and Texas—have already faced corporate backlash, faculty resignations, and lawsuits. Indiana is now on the same path. Business leaders have warned that suppressing diversity makes the state less competitive, pushing away talent, investments, and economic growth.

“Our mission is to cultivate and maintain that world-class environment for businesses to operate and contribute to that economic growth and prosperity for the state,” Indiana Chamber’s President and CEO Vanessa Green Sindors said in a June 2024 [Inside Indiana Business interview](#). “We prioritize attracting, retaining, training, (and) supporting our workforce. Having a diverse workforce and thinking through these issues is something [our members] care a lot about.”

The Indy Chamber’s [2025 Legislative Priorities](#) cites sobering statistics for the already-dwindling state of Hoosier labor resources.

Indiana faces a critical talent gap, with 140,000 unfilled jobs today and only 110,000 additions to the skilled workforce projected between 2025 and 2050. Despite being a top 10 importer of college students, the state struggles with retention, losing 34,000 graduates annually within a year of degree completion, placing it in the bottom 10 nationally.

Senate Bill 289 will receive its third and final reading this Thursday, February 6, 2025 at 1:30 PM—and it could pass if Hoosiers don’t take action. Indiana cannot afford to be on the wrong side of history—again. Here’s what Hoosiers can do now:

- Call your legislators and demand they vote NO on this dangerous bill.
- Show up to the Statehouse Thursday to protest the final vote.
- Spread the word on social media – share why this bill is bad for Indiana.

The time to act is now. Indiana cannot afford to be on the wrong side of history – again.

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The Indiana Coalition for Youth Justice is a collaboration of statewide organizations and individuals working to achieve more fair, equitable, and effective outcomes for children by advocating for reformation to policies that contribute to the criminalization of children in Indiana. Learn more at inyouthjustice.org.



Children's Policy and Law Initiative of Indiana | 1533 Lewis Street | Indianapolis, IN 46202
US

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