

April 20, 2023

Dear State leaders,

On behalf of the national engineering professional societies signed below, we are writing to express our views about pending state legislation targeting diversity, equity, and inclusion. We have concerns about proposals impacting our on-campus chapter members and engineering faculty and staff supporting students pursuing careers in the sciences, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

Particularly, we are concerned with legislative language that could be interpreted as eliminating access to funding resources for student organizations and engineering education programs due to the nature of their mission and which would disenfranchise underrepresented communities in STEM on college and university campuses. This would undermine the quality of K-12 STEM, engineering education at all levels, the workforce, and U.S. competitiveness.

We are non-partisan non-profit organizations dedicated to attracting, advancing, and increasing the participation of students in historically underrepresented groups in STEM including but not limited to Native Americans, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, women, and persons with disabilities, in all STEM disciplines and emerging technologies. Collectively, our societies serve more than 100,000 members, providing young professionals with diverse backgrounds who are either first-generation college students, military veterans, people identifying as disabled, transfers from community colleges, or come from families with minimal resources. For thousands of engineering educators, we provide them with resources, professional development opportunities, and peer-reviewed research to expand their education and better support students.

Our missions are to build highly skilled generations of STEM leaders by focusing on often overlooked communities and providing them access to nationwide networks of endless mentorship, career, and professional development benefits that fortify their road map to successful and fulfilling jobs. Together, we add an essential component to meeting the dire need for a stronger domestic pipeline of a skillful workforce in STEM and all related national security industries in the U.S. economy.

To further our collective missions of growing the STEM education and workforce pipeline, our societies engage with local communities at high-schools, middle-schools, and elementary-schools to support, enhance, and complement current K-12 STEM learning. Through community outreach, our members connect with young students to increase STEM education access and awareness, while improving pathways to college-readiness. Our members reinforce these pathways at the higher-education level through research grants, academic journals, conferences, and professional development workshops that support faculty preparing future engineers, including those from traditionally overlooked groups who help to ameliorate America's engineering shortage.

We strongly recommend that the state legislature does not intentionally or inadvertently risk cutting off funding for student chapter organizations and sections, and higher-education engineering programs supporting students from diverse backgrounds. The critical role that our organizations play in growing the short-term and long-term STEM education and workforce pipeline is critically beneficial to the State's economy.

We appreciate the opportunity to share our recommendations and thank you for your consideration of our priorities.

Sincerely,

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About the Signatories

With 130 years of experience, ASEE has strengthened America and engineering education by fostering a welcoming environment for students of diverse backgrounds. Since 1950, SWE has been empowering women to achieve their full potential in careers as engineers and leaders. Since 1974, SHPE has been the leading voice in bridging the gap between Hispanics and STEM. Since 1975, NSBE has been dedicated to the academic and professional success of African American engineering students and professionals. Since 1977, AISES has been advancing indigenous people in STEM. DiscoverE was founded in 1990 to spread awareness and encourage more diversity in engineering. Since 1990, WEPAN has served as a catalyst for change that enhances the success of women in the engineering professions. Since 1963, ECEDHA has fostered collaboration among the ECE profession, industry, and government to drive the advancement of ECE with dedicated programs to enhance the success of women and other underrepresented minority groups.