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**Texas Rising, Texas Students for DEI, and the Texas American Federation of Teachers March to Texas State Capitol Before Senate Subcommittee Testimony About Harms Against Black, Brown and LGBTQIA Students, Staff, and Faculty Caused By Implementation of New Anti-DEI Law, SB 17**

(Austin, TX) – [Texas Rising](#), [Texas Students for DEI](#) (TXS4DEI), [Texas American Federation of Teachers](#) (Texas AFT), and other students and faculty groups led a demonstration that began at the University of Texas Austin and ended at the Texas Capitol before presenting testimony to uplift the harms they have experienced since the implementation of [Senate Bill 17](#), which was enacted by the Texas Legislature last year to ban diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) offices and programs in the state’s public colleges and universities.

The action took place just hours before a Texas State Senate Higher Education Subcommittee hearing about the administration of the controversial new law that prohibits Texas public universities and colleges from having DEI offices and any units that performs DEI functions, with carve-outs only for registered student groups, data collection, academic instruction and research, guest speakers and student recruitment. Students, staff, and faculty will testify about the impact of this new law on LGBTQIA, Black, and brown communities on campuses across Texas. The Legal Defense Fund (LDF) is working closely with local stakeholders to monitor the implementation of Senate Bill 17 and will also be testifying at the hearing.

“Diversity, equity, and inclusion are crucial to helping students from historically underrepresented communities be embraced, supported, and safe on college campuses. Since SB 17’s passage, campus administrations have chosen to over-comply with the law and become political pawns for the Texas government, laying off vital staff and shutting down entire offices on campuses across the state,” said **Texas Rising Central Texas Regional Program Coordinator Mel LeBlanc (they/them)**. “DEI deserves to be celebrated, free of politics. Our goal in testifying against SB 17’s implementation was to encourage legislators to stop fear-mongering universities into over-compliance, which has been extremely harmful to Texas universities. We hope the storytelling and anger of our amazing students, university staff, and partners will help stop attacks on DEI on college campuses.”

“Texas Students for DEI, representing a diverse group of students across the state, is affected by our universities' over-compliance with SB 17 due to vagueness of the law. This has led to staff and faculty layoffs, along with the loss of resources and funding for student groups. Despite this, our coalition persists in supporting our communities — students, faculty, and staff,” **said Sameeha**

**Rizvi, UT Austin, Texas Students for DEI.** “We urge those opposed to the disastrous effects caused by the over compliance to join us in testifying.”

“Public testimony made it clear last session, and it will be made clear again in public testimony today that the lieutenant governor's priorities do not reflect the priorities of most Texans. In Texas, we celebrate diversity, we celebrate peaceful free expression, and we reject hate and antisemitism” **said Texas AFT President Zeph Capo.** “At a hearing in which state leaders could address the real crises facing higher education - like unaffordable tuition costs, inadequate state funding, and stagnant wages for educators – The Texas Senate has chosen to divert the committee's focus to divisive, politicized issues that help no one. Laws like SB 17 are turning Texan against Texan - to the detriment of our state's colleges and universities.”

“The implementation of SB 17 risks stifling the knowledge, creativity, and growth that a diverse community provides when students and faculty see themselves reflected in their educational institutions. Efforts to comply with this law have the grave potential of chilling topics related to race, gender identity and sexual orientation that are necessary in an inclusive and equitable higher education experience,” said **Antonio L. Ingram II, Assistant Counsel, Legal Defense Fund.** “Leaders of these public colleges and universities must understand that Texas law does not absolve them of their duty to comply with federal civil rights law and the U.S. Constitution. All Texas public colleges and universities must provide an educational experience that does not discriminate on the basis of race and sex.”

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*Founded in 1940, the [Legal Defense Fund \(LDF\)](#) is the nation’s first civil rights law organization. In media attributions, please refer to us as the Legal Defense Fund or LDF. Please note: LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights.*

*Texas Rising, a project of the [Texas Freedom Network](#), builds the power of a rising generation of young Texans, with an emphasis on communities of color, by advocating for change in the cities and towns where they live and at the ballot box. To learn more, visit [txrising.org](http://txrising.org).*