



The National Association of Social Workers Wisconsin Chapter Opposes The Anti Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Constitutional Amendment Proposal

Statement from NASW–Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Chairs

On Thursday, January 22, 2026, the [Wisconsin Examiner](#) reported that the Wisconsin Senate passed three constitutional amendment proposals, including one aimed at eliminating diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. If approved by voters, Assembly Joint Resolution 102 (AJR 102) would amend the Wisconsin Constitution to “prohibit governmental entities in the state from discriminating against, or granting preferential treatment to, any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in public employment, public education, public contracting, or public administration.”

In lay terms, AJR 102 would ban state and local governments from considering race, gender, or similar identity factors when making decisions related to hiring, education, contracting, and public programs—even when those considerations are used to address documented inequities or expand access to opportunity.

Implications and Impact

If enacted, AJR 102 would significantly limit the ability of state and local governments to respond meaningfully to inequities. Even when disparities are well documented, public institutions would be prohibited from considering race, gender, or related identity factors in their decision-making.

Key implications include:

- **Hiring and employment:** Government employers would be unable to use targeted outreach, diversity initiatives, or equity-focused hiring strategies to address underrepresentation.
- **Education:** Schools and universities would be restricted from considering identity-based factors in admissions, scholarships, student supports, and retention efforts designed to close opportunity gaps.



- **Public programs and services:** Agencies could be prevented from tailoring programs to communities that have historically experienced systemic barriers, even when data clearly demonstrates unequal outcomes.
- **Contracts and procurement:** Efforts to increase access for minority- and women-owned businesses could be obstructed or eliminated.

Equity work more broadly: The burden would shift from proactive equity strategies to “neutral” approaches that ignore unequal starting points and structural barriers.

While framed as promoting fairness and neutrality, AJR 102 would reduce Wisconsin’s capacity to intentionally address longstanding disparities and would strip public systems of tools essential for promoting inclusion, representation, and equitable access.

This amendment would roll back already incremental efforts toward equitable access in education, employment and entrepreneurship, and public programming across the state. It advances the dangerous implication that addressing barriers faced by marginalized communities constitutes oppression of the “mainstream.” Moreover, it demands that individuals, groups, and communities who have experienced—or witnessed—exclusion, mistreatment, and systemic disregard place renewed trust in the very systems that failed to provide equitable access in the first place.

We are witnessing policymakers demonize protections by labeling them discriminatory, while simultaneously seeking to constitutionally entrench access for majority groups. These are not fringe tactics with minimal consequence. AJR 102, alongside SB 652, represents intentional efforts to constitutionalize discrimination—efforts supported by 18 of the 33 members of the Wisconsin Senate.



It Is Time to Activate

This moment calls for collective action and civic engagement.

- **Find or build a political home.** Engage with a group, community, or organization that shares a commitment to justice and collective action.
- **Educate.** Educate yourselves so that you can educate others. Speak clearly about practical implications—reduced access, unintended harm, and long-term consequences. Partner with civic and advocacy organizations engaged in public education.
- **Engage.**
 - Help community members understand the ballot language versus its real-world impact
 - Provide expert, practice-informed perspectives
 - Silence benefits the amendment
- **Write, publish, and speak publicly.**
 - Testify and submit public comment whenever possible—center families, students, and communities
 - Write op-eds and letters to the editor
 - Participate in panels, teach-ins, and community forums
 - Use professional platforms—classrooms, conferences, trainings—to discuss implications



- **Call policymakers—it is not too early.**
 - Call your State Senator and State Representative
 - Contact members of committees reviewing constitutional amendments
 - Calls are often weighted more heavily than emails
 - A steady volume of calls can influence whether lawmakers advance, delay, or defend a proposal

- **Be courageous.**
 - Demonstrate that professionalism includes speaking up when policies threaten well-being
 - Teach policy advocacy as core social work practice—not an “extra”
 - **Social work is policy work!**
 - Normalize fear *and* action

As social workers, our ethical obligation is not neutrality in the face of harm, but action in defense of dignity, access, and justice. We will continue to move towards equity and inclusion for all. This is that moment.

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Source: Spears, B. (2026, January 22). *Senate approves constitutional amendments on anti-DEI, partial veto and health emergency closures. Wisconsin Examiner.*

<https://wisconsinexaminer.com/2026/01/22/senate-approves-constitutional-amendments-on-anti-dei-partial-veto-and-health-emergency-closures/>