

## Seattle Becomes First U.S. City to Ban Caste Discrimination

Article By:

Lori A. Medley

---

On February 21, 2023, the Seattle City Council passed a first of its kind ordinance that amends Seattle's existing anti-discrimination laws to prohibit caste discrimination. The ordinance, [CB 120511](#), prohibits employers from discriminating against individuals based on caste with respect to "hiring, tenure, promotion, terms, conditions, wages or privileges of employment, or with respect to any matter related to employment." The amendment also bans discrimination based on caste with respect to public accommodations. Seattle employers should take note of the new amendment and update their policies to include caste as a protected category.

Under CB 120511, caste is defined as "a system of rigid social stratification characterized by hereditary status, endogamy, and social barriers sanctioned by custom, law or religion." CB 120511 states that the majority of communities affected by caste discrimination "live in or originate from South Asia" and that caste discrimination is found in many industries, including "technology, construction, restaurant, [and] domestic work."

It is not yet known if other cities and states will seek to enact similar laws to ban caste discrimination. However, there appears to be a growing trend among private institutions and organizations to recognize caste as a protected category. To date, at least four institutions of higher education have added caste to their anti-discrimination policies.

©2025 Epstein Becker & Green, P.C. All rights reserved.

---

National Law Review, Volume XIII, Number 54

Source URL: <https://natlawreview.com/article/seattle-becomes-first-us-city-to-ban-caste-discrimination>