

Information for D3 newsletter about SB-129

Thursday, March 21st the Alabama state legislature passed Senate Bill 129 which has been referred to as the “Anti-DEI” bill. This bill restricts funding and support in institutions of higher education for initiatives around diversity, equity, and inclusion and disrupts programming meant to serve marginalized groups. This bill also prevents the teaching of “divisive concepts” in higher education. “Divisive concepts” include teaching about past and present systemic racism. Moreover, this bill prevents trans and gender diverse individuals from using restrooms that affirm and correspond to their gender and requires everyone to use the restroom according to their sex assigned at birth. Individuals who fail to comply with these unjust policies may be criminalized or fired.

Prior to the passing of SB-129, Alabamians voiced their opposition in many ways. Members from UCW at Auburn University joined in a student-led demonstration at the Alabama state house on March 6. Students began the demonstration by going into the state house to speak with legislators directly. While many legislators tried to avoid these conversations, some students were able to express their concerns. The demonstration ended with a rally and speakers from campuses across the state that will be affected by this bill.

SB-129 is meant to go into effect in October, 2024. There is hope that legal challenges will interrupt this trajectory, but we are certain that we can stand together in solidarity against injustice and the thinly veiled bigotry of the powers at be in Alabama. We acknowledge the existence of systemic, structural, and interpersonal prejudice, stigma, and discrimination that is clearly present in and furthered by policies such as this one. As labor organizers, we are aware of the power we hold outside of the state house and legislative arenas, and we must prepare to take action if we are fired or criminalized as a result of SB-129.