

May 23, 2021

Dear Students:

On behalf of the Student Bar Association at Rutgers Law-Camden, we regret to inform you that we are rescinding the constitutional amendment passed at the November 20, 2020 SBA General Body Meeting. For those who are unfamiliar, the Student Bar Association's Diversity and Inclusion Committee worked tirelessly to pass the following language:

Student Organizations Fostering Diversity & Inclusion:

1. **In order for a Student Organization to be SBA funded, they shall also be required to:**
 - a. **Certify with the SBA that all members of the organization's e-board have completed the SBA's provided diversity & inclusion and cultural competency training; and**
 - b. **If the organization requests or receives \$250 or more in total allocations from the Student Bar Association, they must plan at least one (1) event that addresses their chosen topics through the lens of Critical Race Theory, diversity and inclusion, or cultural competency.**
 - i. **If an organization requests \$250 or more in total allocations but does not plan a qualifying event in the budgetary cycle that it received the allocations, it shall be ineligible to receive any allocations in the applicable budget cycle until the ineligible request is amended and brought into compliance with this subsection.**
 - ii. **Co-sponsoring an event with another student organization holding a qualifying event as described in section 1 shall satisfy this requirement.**
 - iii. **Failure to hold a qualifying event when required shall constitute a second offense as a budget violation Appendix B Section 4.**

This past week the law school administration brought to our attention a letter from the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) which raised First Amendment concerns with the amendment. FIRE requested a response to their concerns no later than the close of business on May 28, 2021.

Members of our present and future SBA Executive-Board, including Presidents Elena Sassaman, Ashley Zimmerman, and Diversity and Inclusion Representatives Yusef Shafiq and Basma Qazi, met with administration to address the letter and to discuss alternatives. Unfortunately, due to the strict deadline and the constitutional issues presented, the solutions discussed were not feasible and therefore, we felt that the best course of action at this time was to remove the contested language from the SBA Constitution entirely.

We hate the idea of backing down, just because the "other guys" say so, and we hate that we have to factor in those that oppose measures to foster diversity and inclusion, we do. We think-- and we hope, we can still create change, still fight for what is right, and pass this amendment, or something similar again. But right now, we know that if we dig our heels in now, this way, we run the risk of never being able to accomplish what we set out to do.

Moving forward, our Diversity and Inclusion Committee and SBA Council are committed to focusing their efforts on thoroughly researching precedent, similar practices at other schools, collaborating with faculty and administration, and crafting new language to better achieve the goals we set out to reach. We want to assure our Rutgers-Camden colleagues that we are still very much committed to fighting for and serving our student body, but we want to make sure to do it the right way.

While this was not the outcome we had hoped for, the fight is not over. We would be remiss if we did not thank and applaud all of the students who worked so hard to create this amendment and all of the students who voted to pass it the first time around. Your commitment and dedication to creating change does not go unnoticed and we are truly grateful for your efforts and leadership. We hope we can continue to count on you as we continue to advocate for diversity and inclusion initiatives on the law school campus.

Sincerely,

Elena Sassaman - SBA President 2020-2021
Ashley Zimmerman - SBA President 2021-2022