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Today Wisconsin's university community has joined with citizens of Wisconsin to stand up for affirmative action and democracy. The Legislative Council's Special Committee on Affirmative Action has not given Wisconsin's affirmative action policies fair consideration nor has it heard the voices of Wisconsin residents.

Committee Chair, Grothman has severely abused his position over the committee to derail attempts at respectful dialogue around affirmative action. Although there are committee members that value a dialogue, Grothman has made it clear that he will allow no such thing though his acts at the first convening of the committee in October. When collecting research from other state's affirmative action policies, he only ordered research from California, Michigan, Washington and Texas – all states that have in some way banned affirmative action. Thus far, all presenters in front of the committee have only been allowed to talk about their jobs and how they implement affirmative action there. The only speaker allowed to speak generally about affirmative action is Ward Connerly, an unyielding anti-affirmative action activist.

If this committee was meant to sincerely evaluate the effects of affirmative action on the public, part of their mission, the committee make-up would better represent the public of Wisconsin. The vast majority of the committee members have negative biases toward affirmative action and 75% of elected officials on the committee are Republicans.

To add insult to injury, the committee has chosen to hear the opinions of Californian Ward Connerly over that of its own citizens. There has been no public hearing or effort to allow citizens' voices to be heard. Even this meeting was planned such that most of the capitol's doors are closed. Part of the committee's charge is to address the role of affirmative action at UW System Schools and Wisconsin Technical Colleges, yet their meeting is during the holidays and finals week for students and university employees.

The representation on this committee and the behavior of Chair Grothman is slander toward affirmative action and a mockery of democracy. Chair Grothman should be removed from his position as chair for the committee, new members of the committee should be appointed by the present legislature to truly represent the diversity in ideas that is Wisconsin, and the committee should proceed with a goal to fairly consider the issue of affirmative action. **We march to the capitol today to show our support for affirmative action and demand real democracy.**

Alex Buchner

ASM Diversity Committee Member

Junior studying German at UW Madison

As a middle class white male, I am probably not the first person you would expect to stand before you advocating so firmly in favor of affirmation. But the notion that affirmative action somehow damages my own possibilities for success, is a misguided notion perpetuated by the myth that affirmative action is only helpful to women, people of color and other minorities that "suffer" as a result of institutionalized bias. I am here today, to dispel any such doubts. On the contrary I would argue that affirmative action provides universal benefits to educational institutions and workplaces.

Born and raised in the city of Washington, D.C. I have seen first hand the positive effects of affirmative action. As a child I received an entirely public school-based education in what is often considered one of the most under-funded public school systems in the country. Although my education lacked frivolous luxuries and this loss was more than made up for in diversity found in my classrooms. In addition to the 6-10 exchange students that my high school hosted each year, the diversity among students and staff resulted in a school environment that not only fostered strong academics but was conducive to a well rounded education.

But more than just my personal experience, research backs me up. Studies have shown that gender and racial diversity lead to better functionality in both academia and in the work force. Unfortunately it is sometimes perceived that affirmative action takes opportunities away from the white middle class male, me, and unfairly distributes them to less deserving candidates based solely on their gender or race. What this theory fails to recognize is that affirmative action is not a detriment to any individual. It solely provides a conduit through which institutionally underprivileged groups can make strides towards equality. By leveling the playing field, affirmative action not only works towards eliminating social inequality, but it provides for a diverse atmosphere in which everyone, including white middle class males, can be more productive.

In high school I could have very easily gone to one of the excellent private schools in Washington, D.C. or commuted to one of the suburban schools that were actually closer to my house, but those options never even crossed my mind. But my inner-city public school offered me something that no suburban or private school could have. Everyone always says that the best gifts are free, and holding true to that statement, the best gift I ever received was an education in a diverse atmosphere where I was not just another face in the crowd but instead I stood out because I was different from the people around me. In addition my classmates were as different from each other as they were from me.

And now here I am. An active and proud member of the Diversity Committee, and an affirmative action advocate, joining with members of the school and community. Together we stand firmly against any misguided philosophy that Affirmative Action is harmful in any way shape or form. Although Wisconsin may not be as diverse as I am used to, I am confident that together we can ensure our community will not be taken advantage of programs that benefit everyone. I am a white middle class male. / am a victory of affirmative action! I **am** affirmative action and **this** is what affirmative action looks like.

Hannah Buck

ASM Diversity Committee Chair

Sophomore studying Interior Design and French at UW Madison

It is no doubt that when an issue such as affirmative action is being attacked, an issue that impacts us all, we as a community must come together. Students, faculty, staff, and administrators from across the state have responded: UW Milwaukee, UW Waukesha, and UW Parkside to name a few, and it will not stop there. The rallying call has been spread through the student community to partner with the larger Wisconsin community. It is evident that many feel strongly of their right to have an equal opportunity to work, live, and be educated in a diverse environment.

Today is not the last day students and members of the community will be heard. When the "Special Committee on Affirmative Action" continues to debate this issue, we will be there, and we will continue to follow closely. As part of a university that is making strides to diversify socio-economically and racially, we can not ignore the problems in our own backyard. And as we enter the workforce, we will not let this cycle perpetuate throughout our years. The next step is to reach out to the private sector for support. Without affirmative action we will all be *negatively* affected, either in employment opportunities, work experience, or both. As students we have the opportunity to solidify our future now. In preparing to take the reigns of society, we should ensure that it is an inclusive, fair environment for all.

Proponents of an anti-affirmative action Wisconsin policy such as Glenn Grothman, Fred Mohs, and Ward Connerly, would rather that we not be heard. They would rather that Wisconsin reflect the ideals of an archaic, discriminatory system, that would ignore the struggles that continue to exist today. The "Special Committee on Affirmative Action" was formed with the *specific goal* of writing anti-affirmative action Wisconsin legislation, meetings to debate future legislation were closed to the public, dates were chosen at a decidedly inconvenient time for student input, anti-affirmative action activists were slated to speak without opposition. In lieu of all, we have come together. Today we stand in unity for the students and for Wisconsin of today and tomorrow.