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Letter to Coalition for a Diverse Harvard
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As one of the world's preeminent universities, Harvard has an outsized role to play in embodying the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion and serving as an exemplar to other universities and institutions around the globe. I believe that a renewed and strengthened commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is all the more important in the present moment, when those principles and the broader banner of "DEI" are under attack.

I believe that in order to fulfill its mission of educating "citizens and citizen-leaders for our society" (Harvard College), "leaders who make a difference in the world" (Harvard Business School), or "visionary scholars, innovative educators, and creative leaders" (Graduate School of Arts and Sciences), Harvard must build a welcoming, inclusive community that attracts and nurtures brilliant students, faculty, and staff from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, challenges and stimulates them through exposure to a wide range of viewpoints and ideas, and ensures equitable access to university resources and opportunities.

I believe that creating and sustaining such a university community, in turn, requires investing in a rich and varied curriculum and areas of scholarship. Especially in light of the Supreme Court's 2023 ruling on affirmative action in higher education, maintaining a diverse and inclusive student body requires thoughtful and proactive policies to seek out and attract the most promising students from the widest possible range of backgrounds – perhaps learning from the practices of other leading universities (such as Yale, Princeton, and Duke). It requires admission policies that do not unfairly put a thumb on the scale in favor of privilege, while fostering a wide range of talents inside and outside of the classroom and an enduring attachment to the institution. And a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion should go hand-in-hand with the vigorous protection of academic independence and free expression, without which no university can thrive.

As the President of the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions (C2ES), a nonprofit organization focused on climate and energy policy, I have sought to deepen my organization's commitment to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion, working closely with my staff, Board of Directors, and outside consultants to build policies, practices, and a culture that reflect this commitment. Over the last three years, we have created a new "JEDI Council" with a charter outlining its roles and responsibilities; developed an organizational DEI statement; identified and pursued specific actions the organization is taking in three areas – hiring, inclusion, and external programmatic work; and undertaken efforts to strengthen the Board's understanding of and commitment to DEI issues. While there is much more to be done, I have been inspired by the dedication of my colleagues and am proud of the progress we have made.

Finally, at a time when democratic governance is under threat in the U.S. and around the world, I believe that Harvard has a vital role to play in promoting and safeguarding democratic governance and the rule of law. This role starts with educating the next generation of citizens and leaders and encouraging them to play an active role in civil society and public service. The faculty and leadership can leverage the university's unique platform and global prominence to articulate a vigorous defense of democratic principles and practices, drawing on Harvard's distinguished tradition of groundbreaking scholarship in political science, law, and the social sciences more broadly, as well as the convening power and profile of professional schools such as the Law School, Business School, and Kennedy School of Government. Additionally, Harvard scholars can help identify and address the underlying challenges – such as growing inequality, diminished economic opportunity and mobility, social alienation, and worsening polarization – that have contributed to the current crisis.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these thoughts. Should I be fortunate enough to win election to the Board of Overseers, I would look forward to being in regular contact with the Coalition for a Diverse Harvard to learn more about the Coalition's priorities and vision for a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive Harvard.