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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE EDUCATION AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

FROM: Lynn D. Hammond

SUBJECT: H 3927 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

I am Lynn Hammond, a lifelong resident of South Carolina and retired educator and state employee. I worked in public schools, at the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control, and the South Carolina Department of Education. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of the League of Women Voters of South Carolina.

The League of Women Voters opposes this bill because it would have an undesirable impact on recruitment and retention of not only state employees but also K-12 teachers and higher education employees.

The federal government recently cut funds for teacher recruitment and training at three higher education institutions in the state due to a change in interpretation of regulations on diversity equity and inclusion (DEI). This is especially concerning for a state that started the current school year with a shortage of over 1000 teachers in K-12 public schools.

Also, the bill seeks to influence private businesses to exclude DEI from their hiring and management policies and practices by not allowing public entities to contract with those who have such policies. This has the potential for state and local entities to procure inferior products or services at a higher cost to taxpayers because the entity that best meets the product or service criteria may be excluded from the bidding process. This contradicts the stated aim of the bill to make selections purely on the basis of merit.

We respectfully ask the committee to reject this bill.

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