



March 21, 2016

The Honorable Bill Haslam  
Governor of Tennessee  
State Capitol  
Nashville, TN 37243  
*Via email: Bill.Haslam@TN.gove*

**Re: University of Tennessee-Knoxville Office of Diversity and Inclusion**

Dear Governor Haslam,

We write to express our concern about the current efforts in the Tennessee state legislature to drastically reduce funding for the University of Tennessee – Knoxville’s Office for Diversity and Inclusion.

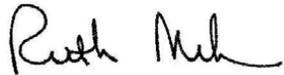
Nearly all U.S. universities have such offices, and for good reason. Their functions include educating students and other members of the academic community about inequalities and cultural differences impacting the various racial, ethnic, gender and sexual minorities that are present on campus and in the wider society. In addition, offices such as these help ensure academic success for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

As representatives of the national professional association of U.S. sociologists, an academic and scientific discipline directly concerned with such issues, we understand the importance of preparing students for the growing diversity they will encounter in the community and workplace after completing their educations. Indeed, most major businesses today have dedicated extensive resources to diversity initiatives similar to those taken up by the UT Office for Diversity and Inclusion. This reflects the large body of scientific research (much of it by sociologists) demonstrating that decision-making is positively enhanced by including people of diverse backgrounds in deliberative processes.

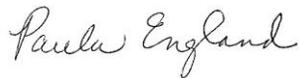
Similarly, major federal sources of research grants such as the National Science Foundation, which help support institutions like UT, explicitly include in their funding criteria attention to diversity.

In a period of growing tensions nationally over issues of race, gender and sexuality, the timing of this legislative initiative seems most unfortunate. We urge you to preserve the existing funding for the Office for Diversity and Inclusion and its vital functions.

Sincerely,



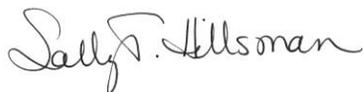
Ruth Milkman, President  
Professor of Sociology, City University of New York-Graduate Center



Paul England, Past President  
Professor of Sociology, New York University



Michèle Lamont, President Elect  
Professor of Sociology, Harvard University



Sally T. Hillsman, Executive Officer

cc: Chancellor Jimmy G. Cheek, University of Tennessee  
*Chancellor.utk.edu*