



**The Society for the Study of Social Problems**  
Publishers of the Journal *Social Problems*

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April 19, 2012

Dear Michigan Legislator:

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP), one the largest and most respected social science professional organizations in the country, with members from every state, including Michigan, and from around the world. SSSP's membership is made up principally of scholars and graduate students, but practitioners as well, who are committed to studying and trying to find solutions for a wide range of social problems. I am writing principally to express concerns we have with the following language, being considered by Michigan lawmakers as part of the state's higher education appropriations bill.

*Sec. 273a. It is the intent of the legislature that a public university that receives funds in section 236 shall not collaborate in any manner with a nonprofit worker center whose documented activities include coercion through protest, demonstration, or organization against a Michigan business.*

This provision concerns us on several levels. First, the University of Michigan has a 501(c)(3) non-profit tax exempt status, and as such – and we know, because we are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization – the activities in which it can engage are clearly spelled out; so there is really no need for a provision such as this in an appropriations bill. Second, we are concerned with the impact of such a provision on internships and comparable placements in a wide range of community and other organizations, thereby limiting the educational opportunities of students and pedagogy of the faculty, and denying these organizations the benefit of the work performed by these students and upon which non-profits, because of limited funds, often rely to serve their and *your* constituents. Third, this provision raises serious questions about academic freedom when legislators inject themselves in the curricula of universities. The University of Michigan is one of the most respected public universities in the world and could not have achieved that status had it been constrained in this way from fulfilling its educational and civic mission.

The fact that we and many other individuals and organizations from across the country are concerned with a provision in an appropriations bill in your state is testimony to the seriousness of the issue. *For that reason, when Bill 5370 comes before you in the Senate, we urge you to strike Sec. 273a.* If you wish to discuss with me these concerns, please feel free to send me an e-mail at [hector.delgado49@gmail.com](mailto:hector.delgado49@gmail.com) or to call me at 909-593-3511, extension 4475.

Sincerely,

Héctor L. Delgado, Ph.D.  
Executive Officer