



September 19, 2021

To the LSA Student Government Community,

The Executive Board of LSA Student Government is committed to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion, both in the actions of the government that affect our community and in the ways we express ourselves in government spaces. Bearing this in mind, we strive to ensure that LSA Student Government presents a welcoming and safe environment to all members and constituents, including the environment that we create in our office space.

Our office is primarily intended as a venue where constituents can meet with their representatives, and where members of the government can meet informally and in committees.¹ This space is entrusted to our use by the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, who also hold a stake in the way this space is maintained. Any decorations in the office are a reflection on both the College, and on our government.

The implications of the [proposed bylaw amendment](#) affecting office space rules, as currently written, are gravely concerning. There is a capacity for conflict and pain as well as a potential for damages to personal property. LSA Student Government is not in a position where deeply-held ethnic, religious, and cultural conflicts can be ameliorated through this plan.

The mechanism for determining what “is” and “isn’t” an expression of one’s culture and ethnic background is distressing. Culture and ethnicity are inherently personal identities that cannot fully be appraised by others. What one person considers an appropriate expression of their identities may nonetheless be denied the opportunity to express their identities under this bylaw amendment. The potential for discrimination against members’ freedom of expression is real here.

We bear in mind a dilemma that will arise if this bylaw amendment is enacted. Should a member be allowed to display an expression of their culture that is nonetheless offensive to others? If this is allowed, our office space may become an unwelcoming or unsafe environment. If not, then we no doubt risk litigation on the grounds of discrimination. This same concern is shared by the Advisor of LSA Student Government, as well as the Chair of the LSA SG Diversity Affairs Committee.

¹ See [Bylaws](#), 18.00.00 (a) and 18.00.00 (c)

The privilege of free expression is one to be held in the highest regard, defended in this country for centuries and constantly being tested. However, there is a possibility of great harm that may come from the creation of a “cultural wall” in the office. We never know the complete stories of those who enter our office space. One cultural object that we find to be nothing but a banner of pride could negatively impact someone walking to our office expecting a safe place. This is not something we are comfortable risking as representatives of our fellow students. The Executive Board therefore expresses their unanimous disapproval of this potentially harmful idea, as we have as individuals ever since this idea was introduced. We instead encourage representatives to take advantage of the following resources on campus where they can express their identities and learn more about others found on our campus:

- [Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion \(odei-info@umich.edu\)](mailto:odei-info@umich.edu)
- [Office for Institutional Equity \(institutional.equity@umich.edu\)](mailto:institutional.equity@umich.edu)
- [Office of Multi-Ethnic Student Affairs \(mesa.uofm@umich.edu\)](mailto:mesa.uofm@umich.edu)
- [The Spectrum Center \(spectrumcenter@umich.edu\)](mailto:spectrumcenter@umich.edu)

Always Seeking to Put Students First,

LSA Student Government Executive Board