

August 4, 2025

The Honorable Mike Johnson  
Speaker  
568 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries  
Minority Leader  
2433 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chair Tom Cole  
U.S. House Appropriations Committee  
2207 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Rosa L. DeLauro  
U.S. House Appropriations Committee  
1036 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Thune  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
511 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Chair Susan Collins  
U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee  
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Vice Chair Patty Murray  
U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee  
154 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leader Thune, Leader Schumer, Speaker Johnson, Leader Jeffries, Chair Cole, Ranking Member DeLauro, Chair Collins, and Vice Chair Murray:

On behalf of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (“LDF”) and the undersigned organizations, we urge you to oppose provisions in and amendments to the Fiscal Year (“FY”) 2026 appropriations bills<sup>1</sup> that would prohibit the use of federal funds for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts or to promote or advance so-called “divisive concepts” and “critical race theory” (terms that have spuriously been used to attack programs ranging from curricula that accurately discuss American history to programs that provide support and encourage inclusive environments). Such provisions and amendments would severely hinder the federal government’s ability to serve all people equitably and uphold its commitment to equal opportunity and civil rights. They would also embolden the Trump administration’s attacks on programs that legally break down barriers for Black, white, Latino, Asian American, and Indigenous people; women; LGBTQ+ people; people with disabilities; and other groups.

Everyone deserves to feel safe, respected, and valued in all areas of life, including in their homes, at work, schools, and health care settings. While the Trump administration has falsely claimed “DEI” is illegal and anti-American, diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts

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<sup>1</sup> Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2026, H.R.4121, 119th Cong. (1st Sess. 2025); Fiscal Year 2026 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 119th Cong. (1st Sess. 2025); Department of Defense Appropriations Act of 2026, 119th Cong. (1st Sess. 2025); Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 119th Cong. (1st Sess. 2025); Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act of 2026, H.R.4213, 119th Cong. (1st Sess. 2025); Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 119th Cong. (1st Sess. 2025); Legislative Branch Appropriations Act of 2026, H.R.4249, 119th Cong. (1st Sess. 2025); National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill of 2026, 119th Cong. (1st Sess. 2025).

are essential to ensuring federal programs serve all communities with fairness and dignity. They also help build a federal workforce that reflects the full range of talent in our nation. These initiatives include engaging in outreach and recruitment measures to expand a college applicant pool, adopting hiring policies that strictly focus on necessary job skills and qualifications, and providing training to ensure healthcare providers can effectively treat patients of all backgrounds. These programs benefit everyone, including people from different racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds; women; people with disabilities; LGBTQ+ community members, veterans, first generation students, and people from rural America.

At their core, diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts are practical tools that help civil rights compliance and foster inclusive environments where people from all backgrounds can thrive, resulting in improved performance, stronger collaboration, and more equitable decision-making.<sup>2</sup> Research has shown that teams that bring together people with different backgrounds and experiences engage in more rigorous and thoughtful decision-making, making them better equipped to find innovative solutions.<sup>3</sup> Diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts also help ensure merit, rather than access, determines what people can achieve. Failing to integrate diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility into core organizational goals not only weakens institutional effectiveness but limits the potential to attract top talent and craft initiatives that reflect the lived experiences of the communities served.<sup>4</sup> Doing so harms those employees and programs and weakens the government's overall effectiveness, accountability, and connection to the public it is meant to serve.<sup>5</sup> Ultimately, investing in diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility programs and trainings yields clear economic benefits.<sup>6</sup> Eliminating these programs would not only harm individual workers but also weaken the very foundation of an effective, responsive, and economically sound federal government.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the value and legality of these efforts, the Trump administration has attacked diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility initiatives, issuing numerous executive orders that

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<sup>2</sup> RSM Discovery, *Why Workplace Diversity Is So Important, And Why It's So Hard To Achieve*, FORBES (Aug. 22, 2018) <https://www.forbes.com/sites/rsmdiscovery/2018/08/22/why-workplace-diversity-is-so-important-and-why-its-so-hard-to-achieve/>.

<sup>3</sup> David Rock & Heidi Grant, *Why Diverse Teams are Smarter*, HARV. BUS. REV. (Nov. 4, 2016) <https://hbr.org/2016/11/why-diverse-teams-are-smarter>; William J. Holstein, *Diversity is Even More Important in Hard Times*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 13, 2009) (“[I]t’s difficult, if not impossible, for [a] homogenous board[] to challenge and offer different perspectives, unique experiences and the broad-based wisdom that makes the board, and therefore the company, as effective as they can be.”) <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/14/business/14interview.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Jose Rosa, *The Critical Importance of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and the Detrimental Impact of Anti-DEI Policies*, RESEARCHGATE (Feb. 2025), [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/388819858\\_The\\_Critical\\_Importance\\_of\\_Diversity\\_Equity\\_and\\_Inclusion\\_DEI\\_and\\_the\\_Detrimental\\_Impact\\_of\\_Anti-DEI\\_Policies](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/388819858_The_Critical_Importance_of_Diversity_Equity_and_Inclusion_DEI_and_the_Detrimental_Impact_of_Anti-DEI_Policies).

<sup>5</sup> Ajuolachi Nwoga, *Breaking the Invisible Wall: Barriers to DEI Program Implementation*, Scientific Research, University of Maryland Global Campus, Open Journal of Business and Management, Vol.11 No.4 (Jul. 2023) <https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation?paperid=126588>.

<sup>6</sup> *DEI Training: Benefits & Best Practices*, DISPRZ, <https://disprz.ai/blog/dei-training-types-benefits-best-practices>; DANA M. PETERSON & CATHERINE L. MANN, CITI GPS, GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES & SOLUTIONS, CLOSING THE RACIAL INEQUALITY GAPS: THE ECONOMIC COST OF BLACK INEQUALITY IN THE U.S. (2020), [https://ir.citi.com/NvIUklHPilz14Hwd3oxqZBLMn1\\_XPq05FrxsZD0x6hhil84ZxaxEuJUWmak51UHvYk75VKeHCMI%3D](https://ir.citi.com/NvIUklHPilz14Hwd3oxqZBLMn1_XPq05FrxsZD0x6hhil84ZxaxEuJUWmak51UHvYk75VKeHCMI%3D) (stating that the United States’ aggregate economic output would have been \$16 trillion higher since 2000 if we had closed racial gaps in wages, access to higher education, lending, and mortgage access).

<sup>7</sup> Rachel Minkin, *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Workplace*, PEW RESEARCH CENTER (May 17, 2023) <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2023/05/17/diversity-equity-and-inclusion-in-the-workplace/>.

target these practices.<sup>8</sup> These executive orders seek to weaponize civil rights enforcement, terminate longstanding legal government programs, and dismantle important, decades-old legal tools for ferreting out discrimination. Pursuant to these executive orders, the Trump administration has sought to cut funding for research into cancer, Black maternal health, autism, Alzheimer’s disease and dementia, and HIV;<sup>9</sup> halt programs to improve teacher development and quality;<sup>10</sup> withhold funding for domestic violence services<sup>11</sup> and school-based mental health supports;<sup>12</sup> and ban the celebration of Black History Month at schools operated by the Department of Defense.<sup>13</sup> Critical initiatives including the Urban Seniors Job Program, Partnering for Vaccine Equity, and small business programs operated by the Minority Business Development Agency and the Small Business Administration’s Women’s Business Centers have been threatened with termination simply because they were identified as advancing equity principles. These attacks have harmed people of all backgrounds in this country: Black, white, Latino, Asian American, and Indigenous; from urban and rural areas; of every gender, sexual orientation, and ability.<sup>14</sup>

Several FY26 House appropriations bills include harmful provisions that would similarly prohibit the use of federal funds for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility programs and trainings. These proposed restrictions would deepen existing disparities and undermine the government’s ability to effectively serve all communities, promote educational equity, foster economic growth, and maintain global leadership. These appropriations bill riders broadly prohibit federal funding for offices, programs, and activities that promote diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, or advance “divisive concepts” or “critical race theory” raise serious constitutional concerns. President Trump’s anti-equity executive orders have already been challenged<sup>15</sup> and, in one instance, enjoined.<sup>16</sup> Adopting similarly broad and undefined restrictions in appropriations legislation could threaten to undermine longstanding constitutional protections and reverse decades of civil rights progress. Moreover, including these

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<sup>8</sup> *E.g.* Exec. Order No. 14.151, 90 Fed. Reg. 8339 (Jan. 20, 2025) (entitled “Ending Radical And Wasteful Government DEI Programs And Preferencing”); Exec. Order No. 14.173, 90 Fed. Reg. 8633 (Jan. 21, 2025) (entitled “Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity”).

<sup>9</sup> Jessie Hellman, *Trump cancels NIH grants on equity research*, ROLL CALL (Mar. 24, 2025 6:18 p.m.), <https://rollcall.com/2025/03/24/trump-cancels-nih-grants-on-equity-research/>.

<sup>10</sup> Sarah D. Sparks & Sarah Schwartz, *Trump Administration Slashes Millions in Teacher-Training Grants*, EdWeek (Feb. 18, 2025), <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/trump-administration-slashes-millions-in-teacher-training-grants/2025/02>.

<sup>11</sup> Christopher Shea, *ACLU asks R.I. federal judge to block Trump grant restrictions for groups aiding victims of violence*, RHODE ISLAND CURRENT (Jun. 9, 2025 6:35 PM), <https://rhodeislandcurrent.com/2025/06/30/aclu-asks-r-i-federal-judge-to-block-trump-grant-restrictions-for-groups-aiding-victims-of-violence/>.

<sup>12</sup> Cory Turner, *Education Department stops \$1 billion in funding for school mental health*, NPR (May 1, 2025 11:21 a.m.), <https://www.npr.org/2025/05/01/nx-s1-5382582/trump-school-mental-health>.

<sup>13</sup> Jennifer H. Svan, *Trump’s orders end cultural observances in DODEA schools, spur review of clubs and books*, STARS & STRIPES (Feb. 6, 2025), <https://www.stripes.com/theaters/europe/2025-02-06/dodea-makes-dei-changes-16741634.html>.

<sup>14</sup> *See, e.g.*, Kate Zernike, *The Surprising Scientists Hit by Trump’s D.E.I. Cuts*, N.Y. TIMES (Jul 10, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/10/us/trump-science-nih-grants-dei-cuts.html>.

<sup>15</sup> *Nat’l Urban League v. Trump*, No. 1:25-cv-00471 (D.D.C.); *National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education v. Trump*, No. 1:2025-cv-00333, (D. Md.).

<sup>16</sup> *Chicago Women in Trades v. Trump*, No. 25 C 2005 (N.D. Ill. Apr. 14, 2025) (granting a nationwide injunction preventing the U.S. Department of Labor from prohibiting its grantees and contractors to certify they are engaging in “unlawful DEI” because of potential First Amendment violations), 2025 WL 1114466.

riders would legitimize the Trump administration's efforts to eliminate diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts and embolden further harmful actions.

To uphold the promise of our democracy, the federal government must ensure that every individual, including those from historically marginalized communities, has equitable access to opportunity. As Congress moves forward with the FY26 appropriations process, we urge you to reject these divisive riders and reaffirm the federal government's commitment to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

Please reach out to Amalea Smirniotopoulos, Senior Policy Counsel and Co-Manager of the Equal Protection Initiative ([asmirniotopoulos@naacpldf.org](mailto:asmirniotopoulos@naacpldf.org)), if you have any questions or would like additional information.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF)  
Access Equitable Education  
Advancement Project  
Advocates for Trans Equality  
African American Policy Forum  
AFT  
Alabama State Association of Cooperatives  
All\* Above All  
American Association of People with Disabilities  
American Association of University Women (AAUW)  
American Atheists  
American Civil Liberties Union  
Arab American Institute (AAI)  
Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC  
Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN)  
Beyond Harm  
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)  
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues  
Coalition on Human Needs  
Color Of Change  
Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault  
Communities First Consulting, LLC  
Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates (COPAA)  
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund  
Earthjustice Action  
EdTrust

Education Law Center-PA  
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)  
Equal Justice Society  
Equality California  
Feminist Majority Foundation  
Fund for Leadership, Equity, Access and Diversity (LEAD FUND)  
Green America  
HenderWorks, Inc.  
Hispanic and Immigrant Center of Alabama  
Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative  
Human Rights Campaign  
Human Rights First  
Human Rights First  
IDRA  
Impact Fund  
Indivisible  
Institute for Sustainable Diversity & Inclusion  
Institute for Women's Policy Research  
Intersectional Innovations  
Jane Doe Inc. (MA Coalition Against SA & DV)  
Japanese American Citizens League  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs  
Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies  
Just Solutions  
Justice in Aging  
The Kentucky Council of Churches  
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights  
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)  
Minority Business Enterprise Legal Defense and Education Fund (MBELDEF)  
Montana Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence  
NAACP  
Nathaniel R. Jones Foundation  
National Action Network  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Bar Association  
National Coalition on Black Civic Participation  
National Consumer Law Center (on behalf of its low-income clients)  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)  
National Education Association  
National Employment Law Project  
National Employment Lawyers Association  
National Fair Housing Alliance  
National Institute for Workers' Rights

National Partnership for Women & Families  
National Urban League  
National Women's Law Center  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice  
PAVE  
People For the American Way  
PFLAG National  
Pride At Work, AFL-CIO  
Public Advocates  
Public Justice Center  
Race Forward  
Reproaction  
Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)  
Shriver Center on Poverty Law  
Silver State Equality  
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)  
Southern Poverty Law Center  
State of Equity  
The Sikh Coalition  
Veterans For American Ideals  
Women Employed  
YWCA USA  
ZeroV