

July 3, 2026

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

Chair Tom Cole
U.S. House Appropriations Committee
2207 Rayburn 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

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

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
2433 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 Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
322 Hart 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 Legal Defense Fund (“LDF”) and the undersigned organizations, we urge you to oppose provisions in and amendments to Fiscal Year (“FY”) 2027 appropriations bills¹ prohibiting 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). Congress should reject these riders, which will hinder the federal government’s ability to serve all people fairly and uphold its commitment to fairness, equal opportunity, and civil rights.

At a time when so many people are struggling, feeling left out of the economy or left behind, it is more important than ever to ensure federal taxpayer dollars are administered fairly and federal programs reach the people who need them most. Yet the Trump administration has weaponized federal funding to target organizations with different viewpoints and groups the administration disfavors, including Black people and other people of color, LGBTQ+ people,

¹ E.g. H.R. 8845, Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2027, 119th Cong. (2nd Sess. 2026); H.R. 8495, Financial Services and General Government Appropriations Act of 2027, 119th Cong. (2nd Sess. 2026); Homeland Security Appropriations Act of 2027, 119th Cong. (2nd Sess. 2026); H.R. 9171, Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2027, 119th Cong. (2nd Sess. 2026); H.R. 9260, Labor, Health, and Human Services Appropriations Act of 2027, 119th Cong. (2nd Sess. 2026); H.R. 8595 - National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2027 119th Cong. (2nd Sess. 2026).

women, immigrant communities, and religious groups.² In particular, the Trump administration has used executive orders,³ guidance documents,⁴ and other tactics⁵ to target organizations that advocate for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility and pressure recipients of federal grants and other financial assistance to conform to its divisive agenda.

The Trump administration's actions have been repeatedly blocked by the courts⁶ but have nevertheless had devastating impacts on the ability of state and local governments, hospitals, PK-12 schools districts, higher education institutions, and nonprofits to serve their communities. The Trump administration has cut or threatened funding for research into cancer, Black maternal health, autism, Alzheimer's disease and dementia, and HIV;⁷ halt programs to improve teacher development and quality;⁸ withhold funding for domestic violence services⁹ and school-based mental health supports;¹⁰ and college access, retention, and support services.¹¹ In some cases, the administration has explicitly targeted programs serving Black people and other people of color and other underrepresented groups.¹² Critical initiatives, including the Urban Seniors Job Program, housing counseling, 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

² Kanishka Singh, *US judge rules humanities grant terminations by DOGE were unlawful, discriminatory*, REUTERS (May 7, 2026), <https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/us-judge-rules-humanities-grant-terminations-by-doge-were-unlawful-2026-05-08/>.

³ *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"); Exec. Order 14168, 90 Fed. Reg. 8615 (Jan. 20, 2025) (entitled "Defending Women From Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government").

⁴ *E.g.* Mem. to All Federal Agencies from U.S. Attorney General Pamela Bondi, RE: Guidance for Recipients of Federal Funding Regarding Unlawful Discrimination (Jul. 29, 2025), https://www.justice.gov/ag/media/1409486/dl?inline=&utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery; Dear Colleague Letter from HHS Office of Civil Rights Acting Director Anthony F. Archeval RE: Nondiscrimination Requirements for Medical Schools on the Basis of Race, Color, and National Origin pursuant to Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President & Fellows of Harvard Coll., 600 U.S. 181 (2023) (May 6, 2025), <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/guidance-med-schools-dear-colleague-letter.pdf>; Dear Colleague Letter from U.S. Dep't of Education Acting Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Craig Trainor (Feb. 14, 2025), <https://www.ed.gov/media/document/dear-colleague-letter-sffa-v-harvard-109506.pdf>.

⁵ *E.g.* Katherine Knott, *What to Know About Trump's Compact for Higher Ed*, INSIDE HIGHER ED (Oct. 20, 2025) (discussing the Trump administration's Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education).

⁶ *E.g.* *Chicago Women in Trades v. Trump*, 778 F.Supp.3d 959 (N.D. Ill. 2025); *NAACP v. U.S. Dep't of Educ.*, 779 F.Supp.3d 53 (D. Md. 2025); *San Francisco Unified School District v. AmeriCorps*, 789 F.Supp.3d 716 (N.D. Cal. 2025); *San Francisco A.I.D.S. Found. v. Trump*, 786 F.Supp.3d 1184 (N.D. Cal. 2025); *Am. Fed. of Teachers v. U.S. Dep't of Educ.*, No. 1:25-cv-00628, 2025 WL 2374697 (D. Md. Aug. 14, 2025); *Nat'l Educ. Assoc. v. U.S. Dep't of Educ.*, 779 F. Supp. 3d 149 (D.N.H. 2025); *Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence et al. v. Kennedy, Jr. et al.*, No. 1:25-cv-00342, 2025 WL 2899764 (D.R.I. Oct. 10, 2025).

⁷ 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/>.

⁸ 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>.

⁹ 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/>.

¹⁰ 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>.

¹¹ Johanna Alonso, *Trump's DEI Crackdown Closes 120 TRIO Programs*, Inside Higher Ed, (Oct. 27, 2025) <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/admissions/traditional-age/2025/10/27/trumps-dei-crackdown-closes-120-trio-programs>

¹² Singh, *supra* note 2.

advancing equity principles.¹³ The administration has also added vague grant conditions and certification requirements to funding for nonprofit security grants¹⁴ and other programs. The Trump administration is now seeking to expand these requirements government-wide,¹⁵ spreading confusion about what organizations can and cannot do and adding red tape to the federal grantmaking process. These actions 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.¹⁶

Contrary to the Trump administration's false claim that "DEI" is illegal and anti-American, diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts are essential to ensuring federal programs serve all communities with fairness and dignity. Such programs also help build a federal workforce that reflects the full range of talent in our nation. Ultimately, ensuring that every person has equal access to educational, economic, and other opportunities adds jobs and grows the economy overall.¹⁷ Eliminating diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility programs not only harms individuals but weakens the foundation of an effective, responsive, and economically sound federal government.¹⁸

Despite the value of these programs, several FY 2027 House appropriations bills include harmful provisions that would prohibit the use of federal funds for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility programs or to advance so-called "divisive concepts" or "critical race theory." At a time when individuals and families are asking Congress to lower costs, the anti-equity riders will add a new layer of bureaucracy, requiring providers to spend scarce taxpayer dollars proving they are not violating vague political tests. Adopting such broad and undefined restrictions in appropriations legislation could threaten to undermine longstanding constitutional protections and reverse decades of civil rights progress. Including these riders would ultimately legitimize the Trump administration's divisive agenda and embolden further harmful actions.

To uphold the promise of our democracy, the federal government must ensure that every person, including those from historically marginalized communities, has equal access to opportunity. As Congress moves forward with the FY 2027 appropriations process, we urge you to reject these divisive riders and reaffirm the federal government's commitment to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

¹³ Budget of the U.S. Government, Office of Management and Budget, Fiscal Year 2027, https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/budget_fy2027.pdf.

¹⁴ Letter from the Community Safety Campaign, Safety and Dignity for All: Our Communities Reject the Revised Conditions of the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (Aug. 22, 2025), https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ioiR32cftNGnpweVsolojWoi5QuoybAN_u9d9-MDM/edit?tab=t.o.

¹⁵ Regulation for Federal Financial Assistance, 91 Fed. Reg. 32198 (2026), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/05/29/2026-10817/regulation-for-federal-financial-assistance#footnote-45-p32204>.

¹⁶ 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>.

¹⁷ *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 (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).

¹⁸ 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/>.

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

Thank you.

Sincerely,

The Legal Defense Fund
A. Philip Randolph Institute
Advocates for Youth
AFSCME
AFT: Education, Healthcare, Public Services
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Atheists
American Civil Liberties Union
Amnesty International USA
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - AAJC
Association for Special Children and Families
AVAC
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Coalition on Human Needs
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Region
Council for Global Equality
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF)
Earthjustice Action
EdTrust
Endangered Species Coalition
Equal Justice Society
Equal Rights Advocates
Equality California
Family Voices NJ
Feminist Majority
Hispanic Federation
ICSWG
Institute for Women's Policy Research
Interconnected Justice
Just Solutions
Legal Action Center
Legal Momentum, the Women's Legal Defense & Education Fund
Leitner Center for International Law and Justice, Fordham Law School
Malcolm X Center for Self Determination
Minority Business Enterprise Legal Defense and Education Fund (MBELDEF)
Mountain View Friends Meeting (Quakers)
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
National Association of Social Workers
National Coalition for the Homeless
National Council of Jewish Women
National Education Association

National Employment Lawyers Association
National Fair Housing Alliance
National Housing Law Project
National Institute for Workers' Rights
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice
National Low Income Housing Coalition
National Network for Arab American Communities
National Organization for Women
National PLACE
National Women's Law Center
Nava Consulting LLC
NBJC
Parable of the Sower Intentional Community Cooperative
Planned Parenthood Action Fund
Poverty & Race Research Action Council
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
Racial Justice Investing Coalition
Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism
Reproductive Freedom for All
Robert & Ethel Kennedy Human Rights
Saving Ourselves Foundation
Sciencecorps
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Silver State Equality
SLS North Star Consulting
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
Southern Poverty Law Center
SPAN Parent Advocacy Network
The Alliance for Diplomacy and Justice
The Cancer Network
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
The Sikh Coalition
The Winters Group, Inc.
UNESCO Inclusive Policy Lab- People of African Descent & the SDGs E-Team
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)
White Mountain Farm
Women Employed
Women's All Points Bulletin WAPB
Womxn From The Mountain
YWCA USA