



May 27, 2021

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AAJC

Interim President & CEO
Wade Henderson

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and the undersigned organizations, we urge you to ensure that civil rights enforcement is given a high priority and is therefore funded more substantially in the FY 2022 appropriations cycle. The vitality and effectiveness of our nation's civil rights laws — the promise Congress has made that people will be free from discrimination — depend upon the commitment and strength of the federal agencies charged with their enforcement, and therefore, ensuring their robust funding is essential.

Specifically, **we call on you to double the funding provided to each of the civil rights offices across the federal government¹** so that they are able to adequately respond to complaints of discrimination; proactively ensure compliance with the laws they enforce; provide guidance, regulation, and technical assistance to prevent discrimination; and collect and report data on equal opportunity across all domains of life in the United States.

Congress has created and passed dozens of civil rights laws² since the Civil Rights Act of 1866. Each of these laws is a recognition that the Constitution, including the protections provided by the 14th Amendment, is not self-executing. In these laws, Congress laid out clear and specific mandates to the executive branch to provide enforcement and ensure that the promise of nondiscrimination was real in the lives of every person in this country. Yet, for too long, these civil rights offices have been hindered in their work by insufficient funding. With limited resources, they have often focused on the rapid closure of more clear-cut complaints, while allowing more systemic discrimination to continue without intervention. They have been unable to hire and train staff to adequately address an ever-increasing backlog of work. They face pressure to narrow the scope, frequency, and public accessibility of data collection. And they are likely to defer proactive compliance reviews indefinitely.

We are all entitled to civil rights enforcement that is thorough, timely, and accessible to the most marginalized among us. That is the promise of the mandate Congress has issued. To that end, across the government, the various federal civil rights agencies investigate and redress instances of discrimination, and provide guidance to individuals, communities, businesses, and recipients of federal funds about their rights and responsibilities under the law. In so doing, they rely on objective, inclusive data on our nation's diverse communities

¹ A list of civil rights offices of federal agencies can be found here: <https://www.justice.gov/crt/fcs/Agency-OCR-Offices>. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Department of Labor's Office of Federal Contract Compliance, and the Community Relations Service also have civil rights enforcement authority.

² See, e.g., Civil Rights Acts of 1866, 1870, 1875, 1950, 1957, 1960, 1964, 1991; Fair Housing Act of 1965; Equal Educational Opportunity Act; Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967; Voting Rights Act of 1965; Educational Amendments Act of 1972; Rehabilitation Act of 1973; Americans with Disabilities Act; and Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act.

and populations. For decades, the programs and activities of these agencies have been significantly underfunded, which has undermined enforcement. We applaud President Biden's recognition of this important funding priority and urge you to ensure that funding increases are sufficient to provide people with the protections they deserve.

As the nation confronts the triple pandemics of COVID-19, white nationalism, and economic distress, every individual faces changes and challenges in their daily life. For some, however, these threats have only served to compound differences across lines of race, ethnicity, sex (including sexual orientation, gender identity, and pregnant or parenting status), disability, religion, and preferred language. Unlawful discrimination continues to exacerbate the significant challenges people are facing today. Our neighbors continue to be burdened by racial harassment inspired by racist rhetoric about COVID-19; entire communities continue to be shut out of housing and transportation opportunities that enable access to jobs in a changing economy; families continue to be denied access to information or health care because of their language or gender identity; and students continue to be precluded from participation in classroom instruction because of their disability. While our country seeks to recover and rebuild, robust civil rights enforcement must be a key component of any strategy. We must treat the enforcement of our civil rights laws as the urgent national priority it deserves to be and fund it accordingly.

We look forward to working with you on this matter and the many decisions Congress will face in the weeks, months, and years ahead to build an America as good as its ideals. Please contact Arielle Atherley at atherley@civilrights.org with any questions about this letter.

Sincerely,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
A Better Balance
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Atheists
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
Americans for Financial Reform
Anti-Defamation League
Arab American Institute
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO)
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
Casa Ruby
Center for Disability Rights
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
Center for Reproductive Rights
Center for Responsible Lending
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Code for America
Common Cause

Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (DREDF)
Earthjustice
End Citizens United / Let America Vote Action Fund
Equality California
Feminist Majority Foundation
Futures Without Violence
Girls Inc.
GLSEN
Hispanic Federation
Human Rights Campaign
Human Rights First
Interfaith Alliance
Justice for Migrant Women
LatinoJustice PRLDEF
League of Conservation Voters
League of Women Voters of the United States
Matthew Shepard Foundation
National Association of Human Rights Workers
National Association of Social Workers
National Center for Parent Leadership, Advocacy, and Community Empowerment (National PLACE)
National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC)
National Consumer Law Center (on behalf of its low-income clients)
National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC)
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council on Independent Living
National Employment Law Project
National Equality Action Team (NEAT)
National Health Law Program
National Hispanic Media Coalition
National Indian Education Association (NIEA)
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Urban League
National Women's Law Center
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
OCA – Asian Pacific American Advocates
People For the American Way
Public Citizen
Public Justice
Silver State Equality-Nevada
The Workers Circle
UnidosUS
Union for Reform Judaism

May 27, 2021
Page 4 of 4



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Women Employed
Workplace Fairness