

April 11, 2025

Mark Zuckerberg
Meta Headquarters
1 Hacker Way
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Dear Mr. Zuckerberg,

As Associate Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., I write to express my concern about Meta's recent rollbacks of its diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility policies. Diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility policies are vital in the tech industry, as companies including Meta have struggled to ensure equal employment opportunities. Increasing the diversity of Meta's workforce, in turn, may help avoid discrimination by Meta's products. Research has shown that several of the diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility programs which Meta terminated can help eliminate discriminatory barriers to employment—and Meta's own data show that they were effective at achieving those goals. Without these policies in place, Black and other underrepresented employees may once again face discriminatory barriers, potentially violating civil rights laws. We urge Meta to reverse course.

All Americans benefit when workers can bring their full selves to work, and when Black, white, Latino, Asian, Native, and Middle Eastern people have equal access to good jobs and the opportunity for advancement. Yet, historically, the tech workforce has lacked diversity and stunted its own potential growth by not ensuring that all qualified workers have the opportunity for employment or promotion. Even today, Black, Latinx, and women workers are drastically underrepresented within the tech workforce and continue to experience employment discrimination.¹ According to a September 2024 report by the U.S. Equal Opportunity Commission, Black and Latino workers remained significantly underrepresented in the high-tech workforce.² Black employees made up just 7.4% of high-tech workers, nearly unchanged from 2005 and 2014 (6.9%), despite making up 11.6% of the total U.S. workforce.³ Latino workers only made up 9.9% of the high-tech workforce, compared to 5% in 2005 and 6.9% in 2014.⁴ Furthermore, Black, Latino, and Asian workers remained underrepresented in management compared to their overall representation within the field. These statistics are concerning and demonstrate a clear need to continue and strengthen diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility policies in the tech sector.

Ensuring that your workforce reflects the values and racial makeup of America can help technology companies like Meta avoid violating the law and harming its customers. Experts

¹ U.S. EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION (EEOC), HIGH TECH, LOW INCLUSION: DIVERSITY IN THE HIGH-TECH WORKFORCE AND SECTOR 2014-2022 (2024).

² *Id.* at 16

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

have long called for increasing diversity in the tech sector in order to help identify and address the creation of biased systems.⁵ Studies show that companies with workforces that are diverse on multiple levels, including by race, are more innovative, productive, and profitable.⁶ Most recently, in 2023, *Forbes* highlighted how diverse workplaces enhance decision making and problem solving, because of the variation in insight and opinions offered by employees.⁷ Teams that reflect the full range of backgrounds and experiences can better identify biased systems and offer solutions.

The lack of diversity in Meta’s workforce may have contributed to the development of harmful and discriminatory products. In 2019, the United States sued Meta, alleging the company violated the Fair Housing Act by using algorithms that sent housing ads to users based on their race, color, religion, sex or other potential historical disparities.⁸ Similarly, Meta has failed to create systems on its platforms that prevent the spread of mis- and disinformation and violent hate speech. As reported by the Senate Intelligence Committee’s report produced in 2019, foreign operatives used Facebook advertisements to discourage and misinform Black voters from supporting political candidates or from voting at all.⁹ Until recently, Meta’s fact-checking provided a necessary rebuttal to these claims and helped safeguard Black users from harmful mis- and disinformation. Meta’s simultaneous removal of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility policies and switch from fact-checking to less reliable community notes open the door to targeted and precise misinformation and disinformation attacks,¹⁰ as well as the creation of new discriminatory products. Cybersecurity experts have also warned that backing away from diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility commitments will further strain technology companies’ talent pipeline, putting critical infrastructure at risk.¹¹

⁵ Kaitlyn Schwanemann, *Experts call for more diversity to combat bias in artificial intelligence*, CNN (Dec. 15, 2023), <https://www.cnn.com/2023/12/15/us/diversity-artificial-intelligence-bias-reaj/index.html#:~:text=Lawrence%20said%20he%20started%20the,growing%20up%20alongside%20the%20technology>.

⁶ Cedric Herring, *Does Diversity Pay?: Race, Gender, and the Business Case for Diversity*, 74 AM. SOC. REV. 208, 208 (2009); Cedric Herring, *Is Diversity Still a Good Thing?*, 82 AM. SOC. REV. 868 (2017) (updating and reinforcing this analysis); Dame Vivian Hunt, et al., *Why Diversity Matters?*, MCKINSEY & CO. (Jan. 1, 2015), <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/why-diversity-matters>; MCKINSEY & CO., *DIVERSITY WINS: HOW INCLUSION MATTERS 20* (2020), <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/featured%20insights/diversity%20and%20inclusion/diversity%20wins%20how%20inclusion%20matters/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters-vf.pdf>; David Rock & Heidi Grant, *Why Diverse Teams are Smarter*, HARV. BUS. REV. (Nov. 4, 2016); 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.”); Roger C. Mayer et al., *Do Pro-Diversity Policies Improve Corporate Innovation?*, 47 FIN. MGMT. 617 (2018); Katherine W. Phillips, *How Diversity Makes Us Smarter*, SCI. AM. (Oct. 1, 2014), <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-diversity-makes-us-smarter/> (describing a 2006 study that found racially diverse groups were more thorough, careful, communicative, and open minded in an effort to reach consensus than racially homogenous groups); Rocío Lorenzo, et al., *How Diverse Leadership Teams Boost Innovation* (Jan. 23, 2018), <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2018/how-diverse-leadership-teams-boost-innovation>.

⁷ Jason Miller, *The Power of Diversity and Inclusion: Driving Innovation and Success*, FORBES (Aug. 16, 2023).

⁸ *United States v. Meta Platforms, Inc., f/k/a Facebook, Inc.* (S.D.N.Y.)

⁹ *United States Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Volume 2: Russia’s use of social media with additional views*, at 6. https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Report_Volume2.pdf

¹⁰ Rashad Grove, *How the End of Fact-Checking on Meta will impact Black People*, EBONY (Jan. 10, 2025), <https://www.ebony.com/how-the-end-of-fact-checking-on-meta-will-impact-black-people/>.

¹¹ Dana Nickel, *DEI and the cyber workforce*, POLITICO (Mar. 24, 2025), <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/weekly-cybersecurity/2025/03/24/cyber-experts-weigh-in-on-dei-rollbacks-00244343>.

Moreover, Meta has faced numerous lawsuits alleging that your company engaged in employment discrimination against people of color. First, in July 2023, an Asian American woman filed a discrimination complaint with the California Civil Rights Department, claiming that she was left out of opportunities and initiatives that used to fall within her scope and she that was “layered” under less experienced employees, notwithstanding the praise she received for her performance at Meta.¹² Similarly, a former Facebook employee brought a class action lawsuit alleging that your company created a hostile work environment for Black workers in hiring, evaluations, promotions, and pay.¹³ Finally, a self-identified gay Latino man with disabilities filed similar discrimination claims in a 2022 complaint.¹⁴ In light of these prior lawsuits, Meta should take active steps to ensure that equal opportunities are available to all talented candidates for positions.

Meta’s decision to end its diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility programs may hinder the company’s ability to ensure equal employment opportunities. Until your recent announcement, Meta had a dedicated diversity, equity, and inclusion team; ran programs designed to ensure that business suppliers from diverse-owned companies could compete for contracts with Meta; used a diverse slate approach to hiring; and set workforce representation goals that the company sought to achieve without considering race or gender in employment decisions.¹⁵ Research has shown that programs like these can be effective at reducing barriers to opportunity that unfairly bar Black people and other people of color, women, and other groups.¹⁶ Meta itself saw the impact of these programs and other policies, reporting in 2022 that the company doubled the number of its Black and Latino employees in the United States since 2019 and increased Black employee leadership by 44.1% since 2020. During that same period, Meta increased the number of women in leadership roles to 36.7% of its global leadership and doubled the number of women in its global workforce. In the absence of effective diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility policies, Meta may revert to prior practices that unfairly excluded talented Black workers, as well as workers from other underrepresented groups, and lose these gains. Meta’s decision to end its diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility programs also sends an unfortunate signal to your employees that the company does not share these values, which can invite discrimination and workplace hostility against underrepresented groups.

While Meta has altered its policies, its obligations under federal civil rights laws are unchanged. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other civil rights laws prohibit discrimination in the workplace, including disparate treatment, workplace policies that have an unfair disproportionate effect, and hostile work environment. Nor have the Trump

¹² Jessica Guynn, *Asian Americans denied leadership roles in tech industry file lawsuits*, USA TODAY (Jul. 6, 2023), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2023/07/06/asian-americans-denied-leadership-roles-tech-industry-lawsuit/70369457007/>

¹³ Shannon Bond, “We Have a Black People Problem” Facebook Worker Claims Racial Discrimination, NPR (Jul. 2, 2020), <https://www.npr.org/2020/07/02/886544638/we-have-a-black-people-problem-facebook-worker-claims-racial-discrimination>

¹⁴ *Salem v. Meta Platforms, Inc.*, No. 22-cv-1073 (S.D.N.Y. Aug. 24, 2022)

¹⁵ *Read: Meta's memo to employees rolling back DEI programs*, AXIOS (Jan. 10, 2025), <https://www.axios.com/2025/01/10/meta-dei-memo-employees-programs>

¹⁶ *See, e.g.*, Letter from NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, In. to the U.S. Dep’t of Commerce RE: Request for Information on Proposed Business Diversity Principles, DOC-2023-0003 (Feb. 4, 2024), <https://www.naacpldf.org/wp-content/uploads/LDF-Comment-on-Commerce-RFI-on-DEIA.pdf>.

administration's false attacks on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility programs changed the legality of these efforts. If Meta fails its antidiscrimination obligations due to the absence of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility programs, it exposes itself to further legal liability.

We urge Meta to reconsider its decision to end its diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility programs. Considering that your company has already been met with legal challenges by former employees and the federal government because of violations in the past, I urge you to reconsider your company's stance or risk more adverse legal action in the future.

Please reach out to Amalea Smirniotopoulos, Senior Policy Counsel and Co-Manager of the Equal Protection Initiative (asmirniotopoulos@naacpldf.org), and Maydrian Strozier-Lowe, Marshall Motley Scholar Program Fellow (mstrozier-low@naacpldf.org), if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



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NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.