

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 15, 2024

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

I write with concern regarding the State Department's use of hundreds of thousands of dollars in taxpayer funds to pay the salaries of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) employees.

The hefty salaries of the Department's top DEI officials demonstrate the agency's apparent willingness to go to extreme lengths to prioritize a divisive agenda even if it comes at the expense of our national security. According to financial disclosures, the Department's Chief Diversity and Inclusion officer received an annual salary of \$194,510, and the State Department's Special Representative for Racial Justice and Equity receives \$191,000 per year.¹ Conversely, the base salary of the average State Department employee is just \$97,000.² These are astonishing facts for an agency whose stated mission includes "protect[ing] and promot[ing] U.S. security."³

The recent decision to condition eligibility for promotions based on passing a "loyalty test" tied to DEI further undermines the integrity of the Department.⁴ National security depends on attracting and retaining the best talent and promoting based on merit. By enforcing such a rigid policy, the Department risks alienating highly skilled and experienced personnel who may feel their careers are being evaluated on ideological grounds rather than performance, qualifications, or expertise. Tying promotions to "loyalty tests" clearly risks fostering division and resentment among workers.

As you know, the current geopolitical landscape is dangerously volatile, and the United States is entangled in multiple diplomatic conflicts worldwide. Israel, one of our closest allies, is fighting

¹ Kredo, Adam. "Top DEI Officials at Biden-Harris State Department Rake in Nearly \$200k a Year, Records Show." Washington Free Beacon, September 12, 2024. <https://freebeacon.com/national-security/top-dei-officials-at-biden-harris-state-department-rake-in-nearly-200k-a-year-records-show/>.

² "Average U.S. Department of State Salary in 2024." Payscale. Accessed September 17, 2024. https://www.payscale.com/research/US/Employer=U.S._Department_of_State/Salary.

³ "About the U.S. Department of State." U.S. Department of State. Accessed September 17, 2024. <https://www.state.gov/about/>.

⁴ Grossman, Hannah. "State Department mandates support for DEI ideology as prerequisite for promotions: 'You are judged.'" Fox News, April 11, 2024. <https://www.foxnews.com/media/state-department-mandates-support-dei-ideology-prerequisite-promotions-judged>

an existential war against Iran's proxy terrorist groups on several fronts, Communist China continues to threaten Taiwan's sovereignty and bully nations in the Indo-Pacific into subservience, and Russia's brutal war against Ukraine has now resulted in at least one million casualties on both sides.⁵ At a time when global threats are evolving rapidly, the Department must prioritize competence and unity, not policies that could fragment its workforce or distract from mission readiness. Further, during this unpredictable period, it is irresponsible for your agency to allocate hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars to support a DEI agenda that compromises the development of a more competent workforce that is essential to safeguarding our national security interests.

The American people deserve transparency about the use of their tax dollars to advance a divisive ideological agenda, particularly when it comes at the expense of protecting and promoting U.S. security overseas. Accordingly, I request answers to the following questions by Friday, October 24, 2024:

1. How many employees have left the Foreign Service since you implemented diversity-based promotions?
2. Are you currently engaged in diversity-based hiring?
3. How much State Department funding is allocated to the Office of Diversity and Inclusion?
4. How many State Department employees are assigned to the Office of Diversity and Inclusion?
5. What steps has the Office of Diversity and Inclusion taken to fulfill its stated mission to "advance national security"?⁶
6. What statutory authority do you utilize to justify the formation of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion?

Sincerely,



Marsha Blackburn
United States Senator

⁵ Pancevski, Bojan. "One Million Are Now Dead or Injured in the Russia-Ukraine War." The Wall Street Journal, September 17, 2024. <https://www.wsj.com/world/one-million-are-now-dead-or-injured-in-the-russia-ukraine-war-b09d04e5>.

⁶ "Office of Diversity and Inclusion." U.S. Department of State. Accessed September 18, 2024. <https://www.state.gov/bureaus-offices/secretary-of-state/office-of-diversity-and-inclusion/>.