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Women & Families
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April 1, 2025

Andrew McCoy Warner
Deputy Assistant Attorney General
Civil Rights Division
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Deputy Assistant Attorney General Warner:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and the 70 undersigned organizations, we write to express our grave concerns that the Department of Justice, and its Civil Rights Division, are acting as if the government can not only ignore the letter and intent of civil rights laws but also can undermine them — grossly violating our rights and freedoms, and taking us back to the 1950s.

For decades, the Civil Rights Division (CRT) of the Department of Justice (DOJ) has played a vital role in enforcing the nation's civil rights laws and protecting fundamental freedoms. Established pursuant to the Civil Rights Act of 1957, which The Leadership Conference actively fought to pass, the CRT has been instrumental in combating discrimination in education, employment, and other areas, safeguarding voting rights, and upholding equal protection under the law for everyone, including people of color, religious minorities, women, LGBTQ people, people with disabilities, students, workers, veterans, and others who experience unlawful discrimination.

As the nation continues to grapple with the rise in hate and bias, and with increased threats to the right to vote, disability rights, and the rights to fair employment, housing, education, health care, and access to justice, CRT's mission remains as critical as ever. But today it has increasingly acted to advance the Trump administration's ideology, rather than serve as a neutral fact finder, investigator, and champion of our civil rights laws.

What this country and the American people need is a Department of Justice and a Civil Rights Division that uphold, protect, and defend civil and human rights for all — not a department and a division that are charged by the president and attorney general with actively undermining them.

The attacks on individuals and institutions for what is lawful activity has been unprecedented. On her first day in office, Attorney General Pam Bondi issued a memo instructing CRT to “investigate, eliminate, and penalize illegal” Diversity, Equity, Inclusion,

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and Accessibility programs. CRT is doing the exact opposite of protecting civil rights. Instead of safeguarding equal opportunity, the division now appears to be challenging, without regard to lawfulness, any programs that help institutions comply with civil rights laws and that advance fair treatment and full participation in education, employment, housing, and other aspects of life. Most recently, DOJ announced that CRT is investigating the admissions policies of universities in California. CRT is weaponizing civil rights laws, like Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, for its anti-civil rights agenda instead of using them for their intended purpose of combating discrimination.

Other examples include:

- CRT has halted its use of consent decrees with police departments, compromising efforts to ensure constitutional policing in cities throughout the country. Rolling back consent decrees undermines accountability measures designed to address unlawful policing practices and fails to build trust between police and the communities they are sworn to protect. More recently, DOJ announced that CRT would be investigating the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department — not over alleged violations of federal civil and human rights laws — but rather over alleged delays in the processing of concealed handgun license applications.
- The division is also silent regarding federal law enforcement abuses of civil and human rights that it would be charged with investigating if happening by state and local law enforcement. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), as a very extreme example, has recently rounded up and is apparently attempting to deport a number of students — in the absence of any alleged criminal conduct — because they exercised their First Amendment right to criticize U.S. foreign policy decisions. Other individuals have been rounded up and then imprisoned in another country, without hearings, in the name of a recent executive order that may or may not even apply to them.
- While a CRT Housing and Civil Enforcement Section mandate is to protect “the right to access credit on an equal basis,” it stood by as the acting leadership of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau recently urged a court to undo a settlement with Townstone Financial that stemmed from a lawsuit, which was initiated during the first Trump administration and which pointed to racial discrimination in violation of the Equal Credit Opportunity Act.
- While a CRT Voting Section mandate is to “enforce the federal laws that protect the right to vote,” CRT and the rest of the DOJ stood by and failed to intervene as the president issued an executive order last week that calls for unlawful changes to federal election laws — changes that would make it more difficult for citizens to vote. Previously, DOJ and CRT pulled back from efforts to combat racial discrimination in elections. It dropped two voting rights lawsuits in southern states and withdrew from a key U.S. Supreme Court redistricting case that could further weaken the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Since its establishment, the Civil Rights Division's work has centered around three fundamental principles: protecting the most vulnerable among us from exploitation, discrimination, and violence; safeguarding our democracy by protecting the right to vote and access to justice; and expanding

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opportunity for all people to learn, earn a living, live where they choose, and worship freely. The Leadership Conference has been proud to work alongside multiple administrations — of both political parties — in furtherance of these principles.

In order to safeguard the rights and freedoms of all Americans, we will steadfastly demand a Department of Justice and Civil Rights Division that advances, not corrodes, civil rights protections under law.

Sincerely,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

A. Philip Randolph Institute
Advancement Project
AFT
All Voting is Local
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Atheists
American Civil Liberties Union
American Humanist Association
Americans United for Separation of Church and State
Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote (APIAVote)
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance-AFL-CIO (APALA)
Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN)
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action
Black Voters Matter Fund
Center for Constitutional Rights
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Coalition on Human Needs
Common Cause
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.
Demos
Drug Policy Alliance
End Citizens United
Equal Justice Society
Equality California
Fair Elections Center
Feminist Majority Foundation
Freedom From Religion Foundation
Hispanic Federation
Impact Fund
Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA)
Justice in Aging
Juvenile Law Center
Lambda Legal
LatinoJustice PRLDEF
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
Lawyers for Good Government

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League of United Latin American Citizens
League of Women Voters of the United States
MomsRising
NAACP
Nathaniel R. Jones Foundation
National Abortion Federation
National Association of Social Workers
National Bar Association
National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI)
National Center for Law and Economic Justice
National Coalition for the Homeless
National Coalition on Black Civic Participation
National Council of Churches USA
National Council of Jewish Women
National Employment Law Project
National Fair Housing Alliance
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
National Partnership for Women & Families
National PLACE
National Urban League
National Women's Law Center
NBJC
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
New Jersey Institute for Social Justice
OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates
People For the American Way
Planned Parenthood Action Fund
Public Justice
Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
Stand Up America
The National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development (National CAPACD)
The Sikh Coalition
The Workers Circle
Voices for Progress