

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

April 25, 2025

The Honorable Harmeet Dhillon
Assistant Attorney General
Department of Justice
Civil Rights Division
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Assistant Attorney General Dhillon:

We write to request information about actions taken under your leadership of the Civil Rights Division at the Department of Justice. The Division is a vital component of the Department's efforts to enforce and protect the Constitutional and statutory civil rights of the American people.

According to public reporting, at least five of the Division's sections have received directives via email to employees which change long-standing Division enforcement objectives. The five sections are meant to protect voting rights, prevent discrimination by federal funding recipients,¹ investigate illegal bias in housing, prohibit discrimination in education, and defend the rights of those with disabilities.² The directives have not been shared publicly.

Based on the reporting, these directives may well be inconsistent with Congress's intent in enacting the landmark civil rights legislation that is enforced by the Division. For instance, one of the directives apparently prioritizes investigations of fraud by the Division's voting rights section,³ despite overwhelming evidence that such fraud is a rare occurrence. Another purportedly requires the "full dedication" of those investigating recipients of federal funds for discrimination to the President's agenda, which could lead to attempts to punish state, local, and private institutions who disagree with the administration's culture war agenda.⁴ And one evidently directs investigations of educational institutions to focus on racial discrimination against white applicants.⁵

¹ *Justice Dept.'s Civil Rights Division Pushes Trump's Culture War Agenda*, New York Times (Apr. 18, 2025) (online at <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/18/us/politics/trump-doj-civil-rights.html>).

² *Trump Ally Pushes DOJ Unit to Shift Civil Rights Focus, New Messages Show*, The Guardian (Apr. 18, 2025) (online at <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/apr/18/justice-department-civil-rights-division-trump>).

³ *Supra* note 1.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Supra* note 2.

We have also heard alarming reports that no career officials remain in the Division's leadership. Our understanding is that the enforcement oversight responsibilities normally handled by career Deputy Assistant Attorneys General will instead be transferred to political appointees. Reportedly, career supervisors in various sections have also been reassigned, while others have left.⁶ These losses mirror a similar pattern across the Department of Justice, including the removal of career officials from the Office of Professional Responsibility and the firing of the Pardon Attorney.⁷ The Division relies on the abilities and knowledge of its career staff to carry out the great responsibility of enforcing the nation's civil rights laws without regard to politics.

Finally, we have also heard alarming reports that you authorized a second voluntary buyout for Division employees immediately before issuing the previously mentioned directives. Taken together, these measures appear to be an attempt to cajole career officials at the Division to leave voluntarily in order to fundamentally transform its work.

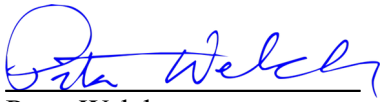
Pursuant to our oversight responsibilities, we request that you schedule an immediate briefing for the Senate Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on the Constitution on changes to the Division since January 20, 2025. We also request that you provide the following materials no later than May 1, 2025.

1. A copy of each directive, including informally via email, issued by you or by subordinates that contain enforcement instructions or priorities, including the date the directives were issued.
2. A copy of all documents related to the creation of these directives issued by you or by subordinates.
3. An accounting of all personnel-related changes for the Civil Rights Division that have occurred since January 20, 2025.
4. A copy of any voluntary buyout, or similar program, issued to employees of the Civil Rights Division since you were sworn in on April 7, 2025, including the date of such offer.

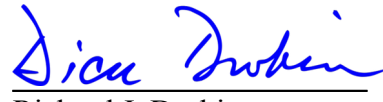
Sincerely,

⁶ *Top DOJ Civil Rights Division Supervisors Said to be Reassigned*, Bloomberg Law (Apr. 22, 2025) (online at <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/us-law-week/top-doj-civil-rights-division-supervisors-said-to-be-reassigned>).

⁷ *Trump Administration Forces Out More Senior Justice Dept. Officials*, New York Times (Mar. 7, 2025) (online at <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/07/us/politics/trump-justice-dept-ousts.html>).



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United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator

CC: The Honorable Pamela Bondi, Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice
The Honorable Michael Horowitz, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Justice