

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 24, 2025

The Honorable Charles Ezell
Acting Director
Office of Personal Management
1900 E Street, NW.
Washington, DC 20415

Dear Acting Director Ezell:

We write today to address significant issues facing Deaf and Hard of Hearing federal workers. Since the President signed Executive Order 14151, which directed the “termination of all... diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) mandates, policies, programs, preferences, and activities,”¹ credible and troubling reporting has emerged. The reporting has highlighted American Sign Language interpretation and captioning services have been disrupted or discontinued across multiple agencies, with interpreters, captioners, coordinators, and other support staff being placed on leave or terminated. The termination of these services impacts not only these dedicated federal workers, but also the skilled Deaf and Hard of Hearing employees they serve, who have been left without the legally required accommodations necessary to do their work.

Reporting indicates that the termination of interpretation services has both harmed Deaf and Hard of Hearing federal employees and created barriers for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Americans to accessing necessary resources and information provided by the federal government. In some instances, requests for interpreters from Deaf and Hard of Hearing federal employees have been denied because the provision of interpreters is no longer a priority or because there are no longer any qualified members of staff available.

Furthermore, administration efforts have led to the elimination of vital resources used by Deaf and Hard of Hearing employees. Our office has received reports of internal systems used to request reasonable accommodations being unavailable, departments charged with providing accommodations being unresponsive, and the removal of accessibility guidance from multiple agency websites.² Other reports indicate some federal agencies have eliminated disability resource groups, creating additional barriers for Deaf and Hard of Hearing federal employees who need reasonable accommodations and advocates to protect their rights³.

We fear the current administration’s reduction in force efforts are leading to a large-scale inability to provide adequate support for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Americans. Resources designed for use by Deaf and Hard of Hearing Americans, and accessibility resources in general, have been removed from webpages for the White House, Department of Homeland Security, and Federal Emergency Management Agency, and that the TTY/TTD phone number listing has been removed from the White House’s website⁴ and White House press

¹ *Executive Order 14151: Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing*, Executive Office of the President (Jan. 29, 2025), <https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2025-01953>.

² Alia Wong & Annie Ma, *Federal agencies begin removing DEI guidance from websites in Trump crackdown*, AP News (Jan. 24, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/trump-dei-education-diversity-equity-inclusion-20cf8a2941f4f35e0b5b0e07c6347ebb>.

³ See, e.g., Natalie Alms, *Social Security shuts its civil rights and transformation offices*, Government Executive (Feb. 26, 2025), <https://www.govexec.com/management/2025/02/social-security-shutters-its-civil-rights-and-transformation-offices/403310/> (“Social Security Administration closed its Office of Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity, charged with managing the agency’s civil rights, equal employment opportunity, harassment prevention and disability services.”); Wong & Ma, *supra* note 10 (“[The Department of Education has closed] . . . the Employee Engagement Diversity Equity Inclusion Accessibility Council within the Office of Civil Rights”).

⁴ The TTY/TTD comment line was previously listed as 202-456-6213 under the now-missing accessibility page at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/accessibility/>. As of 3/3/2024 the accessibility page is still missing and the TTY/TTD number is not functional.

briefings have ceased to include ASL interpreters.⁵ When asked about the cessation, the White House declined to comment on the lack of interpreting services for conferences, broadcasts, and videos.⁶ The removal of these resources has left Deaf and Hard of Hearing Americans and federal workers unable to receive vital information from their government in a time of great uncertainty.

These reports represent only a fraction of the concerns raised to our offices. As the Office of Personnel Management acknowledged in a memorandum on February 5th, 2025, federal employees have a legal right to reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, a finding strongly supported by existing case law.⁷ Any denial of these reasonable accommodations is not only a violation of these worker's legal rights, but the meritocratic promise of our system of government.

As Members of Congress, we ask the following:

1. How many federal employees whose work either partially or fully involves accommodating the needs of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Americans have been placed on leave, either temporary or indefinite, or terminated since Executive Order 14151 was signed on January 20th, 2025?
 - a. How many of these federal employees fired or placed on leave since January 20th 2025, worked at each federal department?
2. How many Deaf and Hard of Hearing federal employees have been placed on leave or terminated since Executive Order 14151 was signed on January 20th, 2025?
 - a. How many Deaf or hard of hearing federal employees fired or placed on leave since January 20th, 2025, worked at each federal department?
3. Which agencies have closed or significantly altered departments serving Deaf and Hard of Hearing employees since January 20th, 2025?
4. What steps are the Office of Personnel Management taking to ensure all Deaf and Hard of Hearing federal employees receive adequate accommodations?

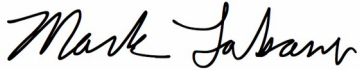
Thank you for your attention and consideration of these concerns, and we await your timely response to these issues. Should you have any additional questions, please contact Tanner Marston at Tanner.Marston@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

⁵ *NAD Expresses Concern over Recent White House Actions*, NAD (Jan. 28, 2025), <https://www.nad.org/2025/01/28/nad-expresses-concern-over-recent-white-house-actions/>.

⁶ Amanda Morris, *Deaf federal workers face uncertain access following Trump* <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wellness/2025/02/04/deaf-federal-workers-trump-deia/>.

⁷ <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/latest-memos/further-guidance-deia.pdf>



Mark Takano
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Joseph D. Morelle
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



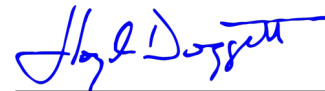
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



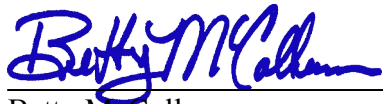
Kevin Mullin
Member of Congress



Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress



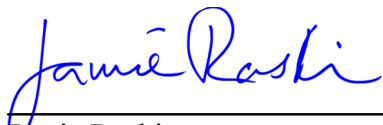
Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress