

Statement for the Record
American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO
Provided to the
House Committee on Oversight and Accountability
Markup of
H.R. 8706, “Dismantle DEI Act of 2024”
November 20, 2024

Chairman Comer, Ranking Member Raskin and Members of the Committee:

The American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO (AFGE), which represents more than 800,000 federal and District of Columbia employees who serve the American people in 70 different agencies across the country and around the world, writes in opposition to H.R. 8706, the “Dismantle DEI Act of 2024.”

Part of the genius of the federal government is that decisions reached by elected officials are largely carried out by an apolitical federal civil service that is hired and promoted based on demonstrated merit, professional competence, and experience for the position being filled. Supporting the mission of the federal civil service in recent years has been a growing commitment in agencies spanning the federal government to ensure that their workplaces do not harbor or tolerate discrimination of any kind, be it on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, religion, gender, or national origin.

Simply put, efficient execution of an act of Congress or presidential occurs when agency and department employees -- who might not have anything in common but their place of employment -- work as a team. Developing and maintaining a positive workplace culture across the agencies and departments of the federal government is critical to

achieving this end, one that actively encourages and reminds employees to treat their colleagues with respect, leave their personal biases at home, and focus on the missions of their agencies. DEI programs initiated at various federal agencies in recent years have contributed to the fostering of this kind of workplace.

For this reason, AFGE strongly opposes H.R. 8706. While AFGE certainly applauds any legislative proposal to curb and eliminate employment discrimination in the federal workplace, we regard H.R. 8706 as actually setting back that cause, not advancing it. Under the broad pretext of combatting discrimination, which has long been illegal, H.R. 8706 would, if enacted, eliminate virtually all agency initiatives currently in place to develop and maintain a dignified, respectful, and safe workplace that enables federal agencies to carry out laws and directives in a professional and efficient manner.

We also strongly object to provisions of the bill that overturn longstanding reduction-in-force (RIF) procedures. Congress amended Title 5 in 1944 to ensure that RIFs are conducted in a fair and orderly manner that respects performance, seniority, and veterans' preference. In stipulating that all employees in any existing DEI office that is terminated may not be placed elsewhere in their agencies, the bill is stigmatizing and harshly punishing employees simply because of which agency program they happen to serve. Again these are apolitical civil servants who are executing policy decisions made by others, and who in no way deserve to be summarily removed from federal service if Congress decides on a policy change concerning DEI.