

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 25, 2025

The Honorable Eric Schmitt
Chairman, Subcommittee on the Constitution
Senate Judiciary Committee
387 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Schmitt:

As you know, the Civil Rights Division is a vital component of the Department of Justice's efforts to enforce and protect the Constitutional and statutory civil rights of the American people. The Senate Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on the Constitution exercises important oversight functions over the Division's work. Given concerning reports regarding changes at the Division, we request the Subcommittee immediately hold an oversight hearing with Assistant Attorney General Harmeet Dhillon to determine the effects of changes she has instituted.

According to public reporting, at least five of the Division's sections have received directives via email to employees which change long-standing enforcement Division 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.

We have also heard alarming reports that no career officials remain in leadership positions. 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.³ 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.⁴ 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 Assistant Attorney General Dhillon authorized a second voluntary buyout for Division employees immediately before issuing the previously

¹ *Justice Dept.'s Civil Rights Division Pushes Trump's Culture War Agenda*, The 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 *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>).

⁴ *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-ousters.html>).

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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.

Under our standing rules, the Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on the Constitution has jurisdiction to conduct oversight of the Civil Rights Division. Pursuant to that jurisdiction, we request that you hold an oversight hearing to update the Senate and the American public on these concerning developments.

Sincerely,



Peter Welch
Ranking Member,
Subcommittee on the
Constitution
U.S. Senate Committee on
the Judiciary



Richard J. Durbin
Ranking Member



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator