

January 10, 2022

The Honorable Merrick B. Garland  
Attorney General of the United States  
United States Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Garland:

The Department of Justice Gender Equality Network's (DOJ GEN) board, on behalf of our members, wishes to thank you for meeting with us and leaders from our partner affinity groups last fall. We are heartened that the Department's senior leadership has already begun to address issues concerning gender equity and equality, including the creation of the sexual harassment steering committee—not only to comply with Executive Orders, but on its own initiative. We are also grateful for your reestablishment of the Diversity Management Advisory Council, and the creation of the Chief Diversity Officer position.

As I mentioned during our meeting, DOJ GEN, an approximately 1,100-member employee-run organization, has advocated for gender equity and equality at the Justice Department since our founding in 2016. In pursuit of that goal, we have worked to eradicate pay inequities that result from DOJ's hiring practices; convince leadership to address the Department's systemic sexual harassment problem; push for a comprehensive effort to enhance diversity; and we have lobbied Congress to pass paid family leave legislation.<sup>1</sup> Attached with this letter, you will find a briefing document with our recommendations for future action on these issues and a description of our advocacy efforts so far.

We are writing now to ask that you further elevate the Department's relationship with DOJ GEN, which has worked doggedly to advance the interests of DOJ's most valuable asset—its workforce. We believe that this Administration's full-throated support of organized labor in the public sector should apply with equal force to established affinity groups like DOJ GEN.

To be sure, DOJ GEN is not a union.<sup>2</sup> Our members do not pay dues, we have no collective bargaining agreement with the Department, and we are not recognized under the Federal Labor Relations Authority. Nor are we an adequate substitute for the critical protections that bargaining power confers. However, as an organization of public-sector workers formed to work with DOJ leadership to improve working conditions, we are the closest thing that many of our members—the vast majority of whom are *not* unionized—have to a representative group advocating for our collective interests.

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<sup>1</sup> You can read our letters and other advocacy documents at <https://www.dojgen.org/what-we-have-done>.

<sup>2</sup> See 5 U.S.C. § 7103(a)(4).

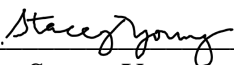
Like organized labor, DOJ GEN fights to protect DOJ’s workforce from discrimination, lobbies Congress to pass federal worker-friendly legislation, and helps individual members understand workplace policies and navigate reporting processes. We also amplify workers’ collective voices when a lack of resources, intimidation, or the fear of retaliation prevents them from speaking out on their own.

There are myriad ways in which the Department will benefit from a strengthened relationship with DOJ GEN. Our data-driven policy proposals and survey results would help the Department meet its obligations under Executive Orders 14020<sup>3</sup> and 14035,<sup>4</sup> and fulfill the White House’s goal, articulated in Executive Order 14025, of “ensuring that the federal government is a model employer with respect to encouraging worker organizing”<sup>5</sup> for wide swaths of non-unionized DOJ workers. Partnering with DOJ GEN will also bolster the Department’s efforts to maintain a strong and diverse workforce. Successfully recruiting and retaining talent in today’s marketplace demands a demonstrated commitment to gender equity and equality.

To that end, we ask that the Department incorporate us in decision-making on workplace issues that involve gender equity, including where it intersects with other equity issues. In addition, we hope to work with Department leadership to explore how to spread word about the existence of affinity groups, as we are currently prohibited from using formal DOJ communication channels except within our membership. We believe that if more workers learned about us and other affinity groups—through DOJ-wide emails, onboarding materials, and prominent placement on intranet sites and DOJ’s website—our groups would be able to support more workers and DOJ leadership.

We look forward to working with leadership as partners to achieve our mutual goals. Working together, we know we can advance Administration’s effort to “protect, empower, and rebuild the career Federal workforce.”<sup>6</sup>

Respectfully,

  
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Stacey Young  
DOJ GEN President

*On behalf of DOJ GEN’s Board of Directors*

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<sup>3</sup> Executive Order on Establishment of the White House Gender Policy Council (March 8, 2021), available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/03/08/executive-order-on-establishment-of-the-white-house-gender-policy-council/>.

<sup>4</sup> Executive Order on Advancing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Government (June 25, 2021), available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/06/25/executive-order-on-diversity-equity-inclusion-and-accessibility-in-the-federal-workforce/>.

<sup>5</sup> Fact Sheet: Executive Order Establishing the White House Task Force on Worker Organizing and Empowerment (April 26, 2021), available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/04/26/fact-sheet-executive-order-establishing-the-white-house-task-force-on-worker-organizing-and-empowerment/>.

<sup>6</sup> Executive Order 14003, Protecting the American Workforce (April 26, 2021), available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/22/executive-order-protecting-the-federal-workforce/>.