

October 7, 2020

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

RE: Recent Executive Branch Directives to Prohibit Diversity Training in the Federal Workplace

Dear Mr. President:

The American Society of Association Executives (ASAE), the largest organization to represent trade and professional associations, strongly condemns recent White House directives intended to ban diversity and anti-racism training in the federal workplace and retaliate against those that prioritize and value a fair and inclusive workplace that is respectful of all employees.

More than 62,000 associations across the country play an important role in training America's workforce, and are among the vanguard seeking to confront pervasive inequalities in hiring practices, leadership advancement, compensation and organizational culture. The association community understands that our workplaces mirror what is happening throughout our society. At a time when racial injustice and inequality embroil our nation, it is unconscionable that this administration orders federal agencies to disregard the world around them.

A Sept. 22 executive order on "Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping" goes so far as to label diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) training as "un-American." In accordance with these divisive orders, federal agencies have been instructed to halt all planned DEI training until materials are reviewed and approved by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). This includes all training that is paid for with federal funds or that federal employees or required or permitted to participate in while on government time. According to an OPM memo dated Oct. 2, "Included is training that is conducted or led by government employees; training that is conducted or led by contractors or others; live training sessions conducted in person or by any electronic means, whether telephonic or video; materials posted on any federal agency's public-facing or internal internet or intranet sites; and, written or video materials or other content that have been produced or procured with federal funds and that are available to the general public or that federal employees are required or permitted to read or view."

This far-reaching directive to prohibit concepts like "critical race theory," "white privilege," and "systemic racism" from even being discussed in federal training programs directly impacts more than 2 million federal employees, over 37 percent of whom identify as a racial or ethnic minority, according to 2019 OPM data, as well as millions more employed by government contractors.

More ubiquitously, these directives set back society in our collective quest for progress on issues that have plagued this nation for decades. Successful 21st century organizations understand the value of creating an inclusive culture, and DEI training is an important tool to help employees communicate and understand each other and become more aware of unconscious bias and other barriers to effective teamwork. When the federal government gives license to ignoring the very real barriers that millions of employees feel in their workplaces, it sends a clear signal that you are

not interested in the views or experiences of diverse staff members, or in confronting racial and gender disparities that permeate every industry and profession in America.

I strongly urge the administration to rescind these directives and cease politicizing the issue of DEI training in the workplace.

Sincerely,



Susan Robertson, CAE
President and CEO