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One Hundred Sixteenth Congress  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Foreign Affairs  
2170 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
[www.foreignaffairs.house.gov](http://www.foreignaffairs.house.gov)

May 18, 2020

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo  
Secretary  
Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, D.C., 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

On February 25, in response to a request from several members of Congress, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) published a detailed report evaluating the Department of State's longstanding deficiencies related to the retention and promotion of employees belonging to traditionally under-represented groups. In that report, the GAO concluded that the Department of State should "do a better job of addressing barriers to equal opportunity in its workforce."<sup>1</sup> We are especially concerned by GAO's key finding indicating that when the GAO controlled for "factors such as education, years of service, and occupation, racial or ethnic minorities in the Civil Service had lower rates and odds of promotion than whites at each rank from early career through senior management."

While we welcomed the Department's initial briefing for our staff on its plan to address the GAO's findings, it failed to demonstrate any serious effort to address the lack of workforce diversity at the mid-career and senior levels. In the past, the State Department has acknowledged its lack of workforce diversity and pledged to take concrete steps to remedy this problem. In 2017, former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson recognized a "great diversity gap in the State

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1. "STATE DEPARTMENT." Additional Steps Are Needed to Identify Potential Barriers to Diversity. Accessed May 8, 2020. <https://www.gao.gov/reports/GAO-20-237/>.

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Department” and the need for a “... more deliberate process to cultivate the abundance of minority talent we already have in the State Department ...”<sup>2</sup>

Beyond cultivating talent, the Department must also demonstrate it takes allegations of discrimination against employees of color seriously if it wants to retain a diverse workforce. For example, in November 2019<sup>3</sup>, the State Department’s Inspector General found that a senior State Department official improperly removed an employee from her position for, among other things, her perceived national origin. Despite the Inspector General’s finding, the Department’s inaction on this case unfortunately gives the impression that the Department tolerates such discrimination. This impression affects morale and is a key barrier to building and maintaining a diverse workforce. We expect that as the Department develops its strategy to lift barriers to diversity, it will also address this perception by consistently and uniformly disciplining officials who violate policies that are set out in the Foreign Affairs Manual or in federal law.

As the House Committee on Foreign Affairs conducts its oversight efforts of the Department’s management and personnel practices, we request the Department provide to the committee by COB May 23:

1. A copy of the Department’s 2016-2020 Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan (DISP).
2. A briefing on the Department’s draft 2020-2024 Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan.
3. A copy of the Department’s unconscious bias training video provided to senior level staff and management.

The request for copies of the current and draft DISPs as well as the training video was first made by Committee Staff to the State Department on April 2. On May 8, the Department informed staff after several queries that it will not provide documents to its Committee of jurisdiction claiming that these documents are “internal documents and non-publicly available.” That, as the Office of the Legal Adviser should be aware, is not a legally-cognizable basis for withholding information from Congress. As part of the constitutionally-mandated process of congressional oversight, the State Department has long-shared information with congressional committees. In fact, the Department has appropriately produced significant amounts of non-public material to the Foreign Affairs Committee in connection with its related investigation of

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2. “This Week at State: August 18, 2017 - United States Department of State.” U.S. Department of State. U.S. Department of State. Accessed May 8, 2020. <https://www.state.gov/this-week-at-state-august-18-2017/>.
  3. “Review of Allegations of Politicized and Other Improper Personnel Practices Involving the Office of the Secretary.” Access May 11, 2020. <https://www.stateoig.gov/system/files/esp-20-01-public.pdf>

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prohibited personnel practices at State during the Trump Administration. We trust that any misperception that the Department can withhold materials from its committee of jurisdiction simply because they are “internal” and “non-publicly available” will be swiftly corrected by agency counsel.

We look forward to your prompt attention to this matter and to receiving the aforementioned information by May 23.

Sincerely,



ELIOT L. ENGEL  
Chairman



JOAQUIN CASTRO  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Oversight Investigations