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July 20, 2020

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary

Department of State

[2201 C Street NW](#)

[Washington, D.C., 20520](#)

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

I write to express my concern over the lack of progress in addressing the Department's diversity and inclusion (D&I) deficiencies as I understand your team is in the process of drafting your 2020-2024 Diversity and Inclusion Strategic plan. These deficiencies were outlined by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) in February, and, most recently, by former African American diplomats in a recent Foreign Policy article entitled "Fighting for U.S. Values Abroad, Black Diplomats Struggle with the Challenges at Home." Both accounts highlight the immense racial gaps within the Department's leadership pipeline. As stated in the GAO report, promotion rates were lower for racial and ethnic minorities within the Foreign and Civil Services, with most noticeable absences of racial and ethnic minorities in the senior ranks. This could be addressed through name-free promotion review processes. The Foreign Policy article also highlights the abuses African American officers endure to move up the ranks, with little to no accountability for perpetrators that are eventually promoted before them.

In the agency comments section of the GAO report, the Department touts its "robust inclusion and diversity efforts." However, after reviewing the Department's materials on D&I, it appears to be a lot of churn with limited results. One of the reasons for the limited results is the Department's view of diversity. I have heard from numerous sources that the Department does not view diversity through the traditional lens (i.e. race and gender) but instead defines diversity to include the same race from different parts of the country--geographic diversity. While I agree this is important, geographic diversity is not the problem-- racial diversity is. Until the Department can focus its resources and efforts to ensure there is racial diversity within all ranks of the Foreign and Civil

Services, the Department will continue to fall short of its goal of “having a workforce that reflects the rich composition of its citizenry.”

While I remain concerned and frustrated by the Department’s misguided efforts on D&I, and its unwillingness to provide Congress the information it has requested, I am pleased to see a new generation foreign and civil service officers willing to work within the institution to effect change. The Juneteenth campaign organized amongst the federal foreign policy community served as an important reminder and hopefully a facilitator to encourage reflection, solidarity, and action. I implore you to listen.

As the House conducts oversight efforts of the Department’s management and personnel practices, we request the Department provide to the committee by COB **August 17**:

1. A copy of the Department’s 2020-2024 Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan (DISP) with benchmarks for increasing the recruitment, advancement, retention, and promotion of African Americans in the foreign and civil service;
2. A briefing on the Department’s draft 2020-2024 Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan;
3. A list of concrete actions undertaken by the Department since the release of the GAO report; and,
4. A description of possible remedies that Congress can undertake to assist the Department in implementing the DISP.

We look forward to your prompt attention to this matter and to receiving the aforementioned information by **August 17**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Bass". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Karen" and "Bass" being capitalized and prominent.

Karen Bass
Chair, Congressional Black Caucus