



OPENING STATEMENT

House Committee on Education and Labor

Chairman Robert C. "Bobby" Scott

Opening Statement of Chair Bonamici (OR-01)

Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Human Services

Examining the Policies and Priorities of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the Office of Federal Contract Programs (OFCCP)

Hybrid Hearing

Wednesday, April 27, 2022 | 10:15 a.m.

Today's hearing will examine the policies and priorities of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, or the E-E-O-C, and the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, or O-F-C-C-P.

Thank you, Chair Burrows and Director Yang, for being with us and for your commitment to protecting Americans' civil rights and dignity at work.

As our workforce becomes increasingly diverse, the E-E-O-C and O-F-C-C-P are critical in making sure that every worker can earn a living free from discrimination. Unfortunately, thousands of women, people of color, older workers, workers with disabilities, and LGBTQI+ workers still experience persistent disparities in pay, opportunities, and workplace treatment.

In response to the Trump Administration's erosion of worker protections, Congressional Democrats and the Biden-Harris Administration have taken critical steps to restore and strengthen workers' civil rights and expand equal employment opportunities.

Under Chair Burrows' leadership, the E-E-O-C has improved its enforcement efforts when challenging workplace harassment and, following the Supreme Court's historic *Bostock v. Clayton County* decision, Chair Burrows approved guidance to explain the prohibitions against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Additionally, in June 2021, Congress passed a resolution to nullify the E-E-O-C's Trump-era conciliation rule. This resolution was a critical step in restoring E-E-O-C's promise to support victims of workplace discrimination and hold employers accountable.

At O-F-C-C-P, Director Yang has made critical improvements to protect applicants and employees who apply to, and work for, federal contractors and subcontractors.

In November 2021, O-F-C-C-P issued a proposal to rescind a Trump-era rule that gave federal contractors the power to hire and fire workers for discriminatory reasons under the guise of religious freedom. By reversing the rule, O-F-C-C-P took a critical step to restore protections for the civil rights of workers.

I am also pleased to see O-F-C-C-P preparing to support an increase of workers in the contractor community. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will create up to 15 million new jobs, many of which will be filled by workers on federal contracts and subcontracts. I look forward to seeing how the agency's Mega Construction Project Program will help more workers—especially historically underrepresented workers—gain access to these new jobs and also protect them against discrimination and harassment.

The E-E-O-C's and O-F-C-C-P's progress under the Biden-Harris Administration is more important than ever as our nation works to recover from the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As we all know, the pandemic spurred record unemployment—especially among low-wage, older, and underrepresented workers.

Under President Biden's economic agenda, we have seen record job growth and the lowest unemployment claims since 1968. Even still, we know we must do more so all Americans can reenter the workforce and access a rewarding career. But we cannot achieve that goal if workers do not have the confidence that workplaces will uphold and protect their civil rights. Securing resources that the E-E-O-C and O-F-C-C-P need to conduct robust oversight is not only in the best interest of our workers, but an essential step to a full economic recovery.

I am pleased that the Biden-Harris Administration's proposed budget provides the resources for the E-E-O-C and O-F-C-C-P to advance racial justice, pay equality, and LGBTQI+ protections, while strengthening workplace opportunities for all.

Moving forward, I remain committed to working with my colleagues to advance legislative solutions—such as the *Paycheck Fairness Act* and the *Pregnant Workers Fairness Act*—to protect workers from discrimination both in the hiring process and on the job. When we invest in workers' civil rights, every American has the opportunity to succeed.

Thank you, again, to Chair Burrows and Director Yang for your leadership. I look forward to hearing how you will continue advancing your agencies' mission.

I now yield to the Ranking Member, Mr. Fulcher, for his opening statement.