



April 20, 2026

The Honorable Andrea Lucas
Chair
U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
131 M Street NE
Washington, D.C. 20507

Dear Chair Lucas:

As members of the Democratic Women's Caucus and House Democratic Caucus, we write to express our deep concern regarding the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC) recent lawsuit against Coca-Cola Beverages Northeast for hosting a women's networking and professional development event.¹ Proactive efforts from employers are essential to help address the disparities women often face in the workplace and for equal employment opportunity to be fully realized. This legal crusade by the EEOC is a political stunt to execute Trump's extreme agenda against women. Instead, the EEOC should prioritize the pressing issues our civil rights laws were designed to solve. **We urge the EEOC to cease action on this lawsuit and redirect its resources toward partnering with employers to implement meaningful solutions that address disparities women face in the workforce.**

Across industries, women face persistent structural barriers, underrepresentation in leadership, and unequal advancement opportunities—these are the issues the EEOC should dedicate their resources to confront. In many workplaces, women are a distinct minority. For generations, informal “old boys’ networks” operated as de facto gatekeepers to opportunity. Women were not merely absent from these spaces—we were actively excluded. That’s why we are especially concerned by public statements suggesting that women-focused professional gatherings are analogous to exclusionary practices of the past.² Such comparisons ignore context, history, and intent, and risk discouraging employers from supporting the advancement of underrepresented groups altogether. Women should not be penalized, directly or indirectly, for coming together to support one another’s professional growth. Nor should employers be deterred from facilitating those efforts in good faith. Efforts to create professional forums for connection, mentorship, and

¹ Joanna Slater, *Trump Administration Lawsuit Says a Women's Retreat Is Discrimination*, Washington Post (Mar. 31, 2026), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2026/03/31/eoc-lawsuit-coca-cola-bottler-discrimination/>; *U.S. Equal Emp. Opportunity Comm'n v. Coca-Cola Beverages Northeast, Inc.*, No. 1:26-cv-00115 (D.N.H. Feb. 17, 2026).

² “[M]any employers’ sex-segregated programming entails far more than socializing—programming creating or facilitating “new girls clubs,” like “old boys clubs” before them, often is designed to promote career development and advancement, provide critical job training and networks, among other benefits and privileges of employment.” Andrea Lucas, Post on LinkedIn (Mar. 2026), https://www.linkedin.com/posts/andrea-lucas-a5b27513_us-civil-rights-agency-sues-coca-cola-distributor-activity-7431479683818512384-E5A5

professional development are not exclusionary; they are a measured and necessary response to the stark realities women face in the workplace.

The EEOC has long played a vital role as a guardian of equal opportunity, particularly for those who have historically lacked access to power and resources, like women. As women continue to disproportionately face discrimination and harassment in the workplace,³ the EEOC should commit resources to enforcing the protections instituted by Congress, not adding to women's workplace challenges and attacking efforts to uplift women. 1 in 3 women worry about discrimination or harassment in the workplace.⁴ Additionally, women are systematically pushed out of the corporate promotion pipeline, becoming increasingly underrepresented at every level. Women start by representing 49 percent of entry level positions, reducing to 35 percent of the vice-presidential level, and further diminishing to 30 percent of the C-suite level.⁵ As part of their mission to prevent and remedy unlawful employment discrimination and advance equal opportunity, the EEOC should direct resources to mitigate such leadership and promotion disparities. Treating voluntary, inclusive programming as a discriminatory practice risks conflating equity with exclusion and undermines the very progress the EEOC has historically helped advance.

Strengthening and expanding workplace protections and opportunities for women is a core priority for the Democratic Women's Caucus not only because it impacts women's economic security so immensely, but also because this issue is personal for us. Many of us have been the only woman at the table during meetings, sought mentorship from other women in our jobs, and experienced harassment on the job. As women in public service, we have had to overcome barriers of our own—fighting to be heard, to be taken seriously, and to earn opportunities that were not always equally available. To go after opportunities for women to connect, be supported, and advance in their careers is shameful and a waste of the EEOC's resources. Spaces for women to connect, mentor one another, and speak candidly about our realities remain necessary.

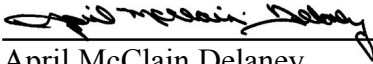
Women continue to face several systematic barriers and disparities in the workplace that require the EEOC's resources and attention. The EEOC's misguided prioritization to attack equal opportunity efforts is an irresponsible use of its very limited resources. We need an EEOC that confronts real, systemic violations of civil rights, not one that searches for isolated cases to fit a predetermined narrative. That is why we urge the EEOC to center its work on meaningful enforcement of civil rights laws. We stand united in our belief, not only as lawmakers but as people who have lived these experiences, that advancing opportunity for women is not only lawful, it is essential.

Sincerely,

³ Isabela Salas-Betsch. (2024, March 14). *Ending discrimination and harassment at work*. Center for American Progress. [Ending discrimination and harassment at work](#).

⁴ Isabela Salas-Betsch. (2024, March 14). *Ending discrimination and harassment at work*. Center for American Progress. [Ending discrimination and harassment at work](#).

⁵ Cahn, N. (2026, February 9). *Explaining the gender promotion gap*. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/naomicahn/2026/02/09/explaining-the-gender-promotion-gap/>



April McClain Delaney
Member of Congress



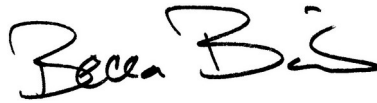
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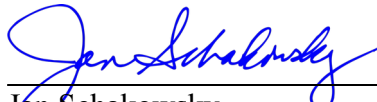
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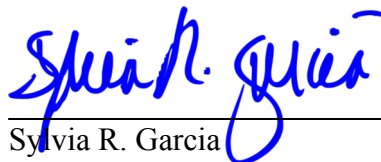
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