



U.S. Department of Justice

Civil Rights Division

Office of the Assistant Attorney General

950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

May 19, 2025

The Honorable Brandon Johnson
Office of the Mayor
121 N. LaSalle Street
Chicago City Hall, 4th Floor
Chicago, IL 60602

Re: Investigation of the Employment Practices of the City of Chicago, Illinois, Pursuant to Section 707 of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as Amended

Dear Mayor Johnson:

The Department of Justice is opening an investigation to determine whether the City of Chicago, Illinois, is engaged in a pattern or practice of discrimination based on race, in violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, 42 U.S.C. § 2000e, *et seq.* ("Title VII"). It is the responsibility of the Attorney General of the United States to enforce the provisions of Title VII with respect to state and local government employers. The Attorney General has delegated the authority to investigate compliance with these provisions to the Assistant Attorney General of the Civil Rights Division. *See* 28 C.F.R. § 0.50(a).

Title VII prohibits discrimination on the basis of race. *See* 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-2. When the Attorney General has reasonable cause to believe that a state or local government employer is engaged in a pattern or practice of discrimination in violation of Title VII, it is the Attorney General's responsibility to take appropriate action to eliminate that violation, including seeking injunctive relief. *See* 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-6(a).

Our investigation is based on information suggesting that you have made hiring decisions solely on the basis of race. In your remarks made yesterday at the Apostolic Church of God in Woodlawn, you "highlight[ed] the number of Black officials in [your] administration."¹ You then went on to list each of these individuals, emphasizing their race:

- "Business and economic neighborhood development, the deputy mayor is a Black woman."
- "Department of planning and development is a Black woman."
- "Infrastructure, deputy mayor is a Black woman."

¹ *See, e.g., 'Could he be more racist?': Chicago mayor Brandon Johnson slammed for 'only hiring black people' comment in viral speech*, MSN (May 19, 2025), <https://www.msn.com/en-in/news/world/could-he-be-more-racist-chicago-mayor-brandon-johnson-slammed-for-only-hiring-black-people-comment-in-viral-speech/ar-AA1F3p5b?ocid=BingNewsVerp>.

- “Chief operations officer is a Black man.”
- “Budget director is a Black woman.”
- “Senior advisor is a Black man.”

You then said that you were “laying” these positions “out” to “ensure that our people get a chance to grow their business[.]”

Considering these remarks, I have authorized an investigation to determine whether the City of Chicago is engaged in a pattern or practice of discrimination as set forth above. If these kind of hiring decisions are being made for top-level positions in your administration, then it begs the question whether such decisions are also being made for lower-level positions.²

It is important to note that we have not reached any conclusions about the subject matter of the investigation. We intend to consider all relevant information, and we welcome your assistance in helping to identify what that might be. We would appreciate your cooperation in our investigation.

Upon receipt of this correspondence, please contact us at (202) 514-3847 so that we can set up a mutually agreeable date and time to discuss the parameters of this investigation, including the scope of information that we will be seeking from you.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,



Harmeet K. Dhillon
Assistant Attorney General
Civil Rights Division

cc: Jesus A. Osete
Deputy Assistant Attorney General
Civil Rights Division

The Honorable Andrea R. Lucas
Acting Chair
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

² Pursuant to 29 C.F.R. § 1601.6, we have provided this information to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for its consideration in filing a Commissioner’s Charge.