

From: DHS Secretary Andrea Palm
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Sent: Wednesday, September 2, 2020 3:27 PM
Subject: Advancing Equity at DHS

Dear Colleagues,

I want to follow up on my recent message to share some additional thoughts about the traumatic events we have experienced in our state over the past ten days, and to provide more details about what we as an agency are actively doing to achieve a more just and equitable workplace and state.

The fact that Jacob Blake's shooting occurred in our own backyard – granted, something that we have seen too many times before – makes this especially painful, including for many of us at DHS, and particularly for our Black colleagues and colleagues of color. Although I cannot possibly feel the effects of this in the way these colleagues are feeling it, I want all of you to know that I support you and will continue working with you to ensure that DHS develops and implements a strategy and framework for realizing systems-level change. This includes building upon the work that has already been done by many of you across the department, as well as beginning new work to complement and build upon this momentum that is already in motion.

To do this incredibly important work and set ourselves up for long-lasting and meaningful change, staff in the Office of the Secretary have been soliciting input and feedback from staff across DHS on what actions we need to take. In part, these conversations over the past few months reinforced what we already knew: our agency is filled with individuals who are committed to promoting and advancing our equity and anti-racism work. And in addition to this, we learned that DHS will be best positioned to advance this work by formalizing, organizing, and giving greater visibility and strength to it. One way we will do this is through establishing a cross-divisional committee, with leadership and membership reflective of staff of color, to conduct research, deliver feedback, and develop recommendations related to eliminating disparities in our internal work as an employer and in our external work in service to the people of our

state.

A “formation team” of DHS staff has volunteered to lead the process to form this committee and has been working diligently over the past several weeks to do so. So far, the formation team has organized their work along several lines of effort: engaging staff and soliciting input; developing the mission/vision of the new cross-divisional committee; and establishing an equitable, transparent process for selecting committee members.

There has been an urgency to form this committee as quickly as possible, and we recognize that not everyone has had the chance to participate in this work until this point. However, through the structure and process that is being created, our intent is to build a pathway through which all DHS staff have an opportunity for involvement, feedback, and input.

In the coming days you will receive a short survey via email, which should take less than 5 minutes to complete and will give you an immediate way to become involved in this critical work.

I want you to know that this is just one email in a series of updates that I will be sending you over the next weeks and months to detail our work to combat systemic racism. This work includes supporting and responding to Governor Evers’ call for a diverse, equitable and inclusive state government in [Executive Order 59](#), as well as the creation of the Governor’s Health Equity Council as directed in [Executive Order 17](#). Through all of this work, our goal will be to arrive at a place where the health and safety of all Wisconsinites is fully achieved.

We will continue to keep you informed and updated as this important work continues. Thank you for all that you do for the people of Wisconsin.

Sincerely,

Andrea Palm Secretary-designee

