

January 19, 2023

Tina T. Williams,
Director, Division of Policy and Program Development
Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue NW, Room C-3325
Washington, DC 20210

Submitted via regulations.gov

**Re: Comments on Supply and Service Program; Proposed Approval of
Information Collection Requirements; FR Doc. 2022-25311**

Dear Ms. Williams:

The National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs' (OFCCP) request for reauthorization of its compliance review scheduling letter. We wholeheartedly support the proposal that the scheduling letter collect more detailed and complete information at the outset of a compliance review. This change is essential for OFCCP to conduct more efficient, consistent, and effective reviews of federal contractors' compliance with nondiscrimination and equal employment opportunity requirements. As Director Yang has concluded, enhancing the effectiveness of these compliance reviews will "positively impact more workers" through increased contractor compliance.

A significant portion of the American workers stand to benefit from enhanced contractor compliance. OFCCP has jurisdiction over approximately 120,000 contractor establishments and 25,000 firms, which employ approximately 20% of the American workforce. And with the new historic federal investments for infrastructure and economic recovery, many more businesses will become federal contractors subject to OFCCP oversight. Enhancing OFCCP's ability to make good jobs free from discrimination available to all is especially critical.

Founded in 1893, NCJW is the oldest Jewish women's volunteer organization in the United States. Our 210,000 grassroots volunteers and advocates turn progressive ideals into action and make change happen. Inspired by Jewish values, NCJW strives for social justice by improving the quality of life for women, children, and families and by safeguarding individual rights and freedoms. NCJW advocates carry out the organization's long tradition of progressive action through a powerful combination of community organizing, education, direct service, and advocacy. Through more than 50 sections and action teams across the country as well as a strong State Policy Advocacy network, NCJW works on local, state, and federal issues.

Despite longstanding protections under the law, working people across the United States continue to experience employment discrimination that robs them of employment opportunities, economic security, and dignity on the job. The cost of discrimination for people of color, women, LGBTQ+ people, people with disabilities, veterans, and other marginalized and multi-marginalized groups is significant. Workplace discrimination can prevent access to a job or a promotion, cause a hostile working environment, or lower pay — all because of who you are. These unlawful practices inhibit economic security and opportunity and help to perpetuate disparities in health outcomes, housing, education, and more.

We at NCJW recognize that the cost of discrimination is especially high for women in the workplace and significantly affects a woman's pay. Women are paid 77 cents for every dollar paid to men, and that gap is even wider for women of color. In 2021, Black women were paid 64 cents, Latina women 54 cents, and Native American women 51 cents. This pay gap is a direct result of gender and racial discrimination in the workplace. Not only does this affect a woman's economic security, but it also affects a woman's ability to support their family, community, and future. These effects extend into the community, negatively impacting businesses and the overall economy. We know that enhancing the effectiveness of compliance reviews will be an important step in ensuring success for women in the workplace.

When companies have the privilege of contracting with the federal government, they not only must refrain from employment discrimination, but also must agree to take affirmative steps to promote employment opportunities for individuals who are members of certain underrepresented groups. These affirmative steps include proactively monitoring workplace equal employment opportunity and pay equity, making a meaningful effort to recruit qualified applicants from groups who are underrepresented in their workplaces, and breaking down barriers to equal opportunity for veterans and individuals with disabilities. Federal contractors subject to these requirements have better records when it comes to equal employment opportunity than employers who are not federal contractors. OFCCP oversees and enforces compliance with these nondiscrimination and affirmative action requirements.

OFCCP is unique in being able to conduct systemic compliance reviews as part of its enforcement authority. Through compliance reviews, OFCCP can proactively identify, investigate, and remedy patterns of discrimination, even in the absence of an individual complaint, and can evaluate contractors' compliance with affirmative action obligations. The scheduling letter, which OFCCP now proposes to revise, is the document OFCCP uses to notify contractors that they have been selected to undergo a compliance review and identifies the initial information those contractors must provide.

OFCCP proposes that its scheduling letter request more detailed and specific information from contractors at the outset of compliance reviews. Updating the scheduling letter to obtain critical information at the beginning of the compliance review will support OFCCP's goal of strengthening the effectiveness of its compliance evaluations, promoting greater contractor compliance, and ultimately benefiting more workers. It will also encourage employers to self-audit the employment systems referenced in OFCCP's updated requests (e.g., technology-based employment systems) to identify potential EEO issues *before* they are selected for a compliance review by the OFCCP. The new information would include:

- Existing employment policies concerning equal opportunity, including anti-harassment policies, EEO complaint procedures, and employment agreements, such as arbitration agreements, that impact employees' equal opportunity rights and complaint processes. Having this information at the outset is essential for OFCCP to understand the contractors' systems and proceed with an informed and targeted review.
- More details about the number of qualified people of color and women available for employment in each job group, enhancing OFCCP's ability to evaluate contractors' affirmative action programs.
- A list of any programs the contractor developed to respond to problem areas identified in the contractor's required analyses of their employment process, enabling OFCCP to better tailor its review process.
- More complete information on compensation practices, including documentation of contractors' compensation analyses and two years of compensation data, rather than one.
- Additional information about the contractor's outreach and recruitment efforts to individuals with disabilities and veterans. This level of detail will require more than the current cursory summaries from the contractors, making OFCCP analysis more informed.
- More detailed information about promotions and terminations, including information necessary to make the review meaningful, such as whether the promotions were competitive and the reason for termination.
- New information on the contractor's use of technology-based employment selection procedures, including artificial intelligence, algorithms, and automated systems, made essential given the documented potential for bias in such systems.
- For post-secondary institutions and contractors with "campus-like settings" (e.g. hospitals or information technology companies), the relevant information for all AAPs for the campus as a whole. This clarification ensures that OFCCP will have complete and holistic information regarding the campus and enhances the efficiency of the review.

If authorized as proposed, these changes will speed the pace of reviews, conserve scarce agency resources, provide additional clarity for employers as to their obligations, and enable OFCCP to more quickly and accurately identify both potential problem areas and successes.

OFCCP has tailored the proposed changes to the scheduling letter to minimize the additional burden on contractors. As the agency explains, the new scheduling letter would reduce contractor uncertainty over what documentation is sufficient for the review and enhance review efficiency for both the contractor and OFCCP. And it would have minimal impact on small businesses, given limited recordkeeping and reporting requirements for contractors with relatively few employees.

Accordingly, we enthusiastically support OFCCP's requested authorization of the enhanced compliance review scheduling letter and encourage the agency to finalize it without change. We expect that the OFCCP's compliance reviews will be strengthened with this change and ensure strong nondiscrimination and equal opportunity employment requirements for all federal contractors. These measures will also help ensure the economic security and safety of women, which is crucial to the success and well-being of communities in the US.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the proposed rule. Please do not hesitate to contact Faith Williams, Associate Director of Government Relations and Advocacy at fwilliams@ncjw.org to provide further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sheila Katz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sheila Katz

Chief Executive Office

National Council of Jewish Women