

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

January 30, 2023

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Austin:

We write to inquire how you are addressing racially disparaging comments made by a Department of Defense (DOD) official and to what degree her viewpoints are more widely accepted, promoted, or dispersed throughout the Department. A number of our colleagues, including members of the House Armed Services Committee, have joined us in demanding answers to this straightforward inquiry.¹ To date, no meaningful answers have been forthcoming.

This is unacceptable.

Our society values the virtues of merit, hard work, and equality of opportunity which distinguish our nation from others. It is outrageous that a DOD official whose job it is to oversee “worldwide K-12 education programs for the children of DOD personnel,” has engaged in racially disparaging comments with clearly inflammatory language on her social media and in other writings. Her comments do not represent the American ideal to treat everyone with respect. In fact, they call into question the current Administration’s commitment to ensuring that an involuntary trait of birth, like skin color, is an irrelevant factor in one’s ability to access opportunity and advancement. Leftist woke politics have no place in our military’s mission to protect *all* Americans.

Kelisa Wing, the “chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer”² in the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA), previously made alarming comments exhibiting overt racial bias. For instance, on her Twitter account, she self-identified as a “woke administrator,”

¹ *Gallagher, Franklin Demand Answers from Pentagon Regarding Senior Official’s Racially Divisive Statements*, Sept. 19, 2022, available at <https://gallagher.house.gov/media/press-releases/gallagher-franklin-demand-answers-pentagon-regarding-senior-officials-rationally>.

² Patrick Reilly, ‘Woke’ Department of Defense equity chief Kelisa Wing has history of anti-white Twitter posts: report, NEW YORK POST, Sept. 13, 2022.

decrying “white nonsense.”³ It was reported she referred to “CAUdacity,” a pejorative used to demean white people, combining the terms “Caucasian” and “audacity.”⁴ Wing also expressed her displeasure with white people, saying, “I am exhausted by 99% of the white men in education and 95% of the white women,” posting again, “Where can I get a break from white nonsense for a while?”⁵ She also reportedly disseminated her woke invectives in a book, writing, “White privilege hurts a lot of people. If you are White, you might not feel bad about hurting others or you might feel afraid to lose this privilege. Privileges like extra money in your pocket that you didn't earn.”⁶ This kind of divisive rhetoric has no place anywhere, particularly for someone employed in a job whose purpose should be to encourage equal treatment of everyone. As Ms. Wing’s behavior wildly betrayed her employment mission, it begs the question whether her views are more widely held throughout portions of DOD leadership or if they are merely a product of her own intolerance.

We sincerely hope these are not the views being propagated to schoolchildren of our service men and women stationed throughout the world. To better understand what the DOD is doing to address Ms. Wing’s blatantly offensive comments, which should have been known by DOD leadership prior to her hiring, please provide the following documents and information as soon as possible but no later than February 13, 2023.

1. All documents and communications indicating whether DOD officials were aware of Ms. Wing’s inappropriate comments prior to hiring her as the chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer in the DOD Education Activity (DoDEA) office;
2. All material used by the DoDEA Chief of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion or her office promoting the exclusion, denigration, discrimination of any individual or group of people on account of race or ethnicity, critical race theory, or culpability of any living person for historical actions;
3. All material used by DoDEA in educating schoolchildren of military service men and women serving domestically or overseas which promotes the exclusion, denigration, discrimination of any individual or group of people on account of race or ethnicity, critical race theory, or culpability of any living person for historical actions;
4. All documents, communications, videos, or other material used, produced, or shared by DOD officials pertaining to servicemembers’ parental rights over their children’s educational formation;

³ Ben Whedon, *DOD equity head posted anti-white comments on social media prior to hiring*, JUST THE NEWS, Sept. 15, 2022.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Charles Creitz, *Pompeo blasts Biden over Pentagon equity officer: They want to make it about ‘green energy and racism’*, FOX NEWS, Sept. 14, 2022.

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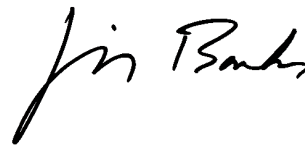
5. All communications between or among officials in DoDEA and others inside the Pentagon or DOD related to educational material promoting the exclusion, denigration, discrimination of any individual or group of people on account of race or ethnicity, critical race theory, or culpability of any living person for historical actions; and,
6. All early childhood and primary school syllabi, instructional materials, teacher manuals, and curricula used throughout DOD, including recently approved Early Learning Matters curriculum for children up to age 5.

Thank you for your consideration of these important matters. The Committee on Armed Services, under Rule X, clause 1, of the Rules of the House of Representatives, maintains oversight jurisdiction over the Department of Defense generally, including the Departments of the Army, Navy, and Air Force, and is provided special oversight functions to “review and study on a continuing basis laws, programs, and Government activities relating to...the education of military dependents in schools.” To arrange delivery of documents or ask any related follow-up questions, please contact Ryan Breitenbach of the Committee on Armed Services Republican Staff.

Sincerely,



Mike Rogers
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services



Jim Banks
Chairman
Subcommittee on Military Personnel

cc: The Honorable Adam Smith, Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services