

Municipal Executives Association

Statement on Racial Equity

MEA has served and advanced the interests of San Francisco managers since its inception in 1944. As the exclusive representative of approximately 1,300 managers in City departments, the SF Housing Authority and the Trial Courts, MEA has worked tirelessly to better the working conditions and compensation for our managers. This has included advising and counseling managers on the avenues they may take to challenge discrimination and harassment. Recently we have been challenged to address the racial inequities that are roiling not just our City but the country as a whole. MEA's Board of Directors and Staff remain committed to addressing racial disparities that directly impact our managers, as well as taking an affirmative stance to address structural and institutional racism in the City's internal practices and systems as well as in the delivery of services to the public.

It is time to prioritize systemic change and racial equity within the San Francisco City government on behalf of all workers and communities. As San Francisco's largest employer, the City and County of San Francisco has a unique opportunity to dismantle the harmful cultures, practices, and policies that reinforce anti-Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) discrimination, structural racism and bias.

We recognize, and research supports, that racial inequities are not random, yet are structural. BIPOC employees at the City and County of San Francisco have faced discrimination and harassment for decades with many concerns remaining unresolved. We further recognize that these inequities will not disappear on their own. With the creation of the Office of Racial Equity (ORE), the City has a new opportunity to develop systems, processes, and practices that adequately systematize equitable support of all employees. MEA will actively engage with the Office of Racial Equity (ORE) to address historic inequities that exist within the municipal executive classifications.

City agencies and City unions must ensure that our worksites are supportive for all employees. A safe, equitable workplace is an actively anti-racist and inclusive one. Due to the persistence of structural racism, anti-Black racism, BIPOC racism, and inequities within City workplaces, more work will need to be done to actively dismantle racist structures, behaviors, and norms. MEA will work in solidarity with ORE in its mission to eliminate racial inequities in the City.

We further recognize that affirming and living values that promote racial equity and eliminate bias and discrimination in the workplace help create a society that reflects our highest moral and democratic principles.

Our work is to listen to those who have been harmed by systemic racism. Our work is to know when it is time to follow community leadership and when it is time for us to lead. It also requires that we serve as culturally competent advocates by developing skills for communication and interaction across cultures

This statement of Racial Equity is a necessary step towards operationalizing equity into meaningful action towards institutional change with urgency, transparency and accountability. We believe that when managers and department heads prioritize change and act with urgency, change will be embraced and can occur quickly. Here are the goals and actions we plan to take in the short, mid and long-term:

1. The starting point of our work in the area of racial equity must be reflection and internal examination, for MEA to engage and facilitate our members in open and courageous conversations on racism, inequity and privilege.
2. MEA will consider the recommendations of the ORE as a framework for the development of actionable policy and support training to help members understand the effects of long-term discrimination and to examine bias.
3. MEA will work with departments to adopt clear expectations and accountability for racially equitable work places. MEA will challenge department heads and managers to use best practices to minimize bias and incorporate racial equity throughout all phases of the hiring and promotion process. This includes participation by BIPOC panelists from within the City and outside, whenever possible, to participate in the hiring process to ensure equity and transparency. Our goal is to advocate for a 180 degree change in practices that have resulted in non-diverse hiring results.
4. MEA recognizes that there is a high disparity of disciplinary actions and terminations among BIPOC employees due to the lack of a clear City-wide policy that is applied consistently. MEA will advocate for changes in workplace culture that support and coach employees as the first step for more equitable treatment of BIPOC employees, and the creation of new review processes to eliminate current, ongoing racial disparities. MEA will advocate for the implementation of de-escalation procedures to be available to employees and used by managers whenever possible before disciplinary actions are taken. MEA believes that good faith mediation by managers and department heads is an important and effective tool that should be used, at the request of employees, to resolve issues before they escalate.
5. To strengthen racial and ethnic diversity among managers and employees at all levels across the City, MEA will advocate for the development and implementation of programs to intentionally help identify, recruit, and retain BIPOC employees and foster meaningful inclusion in the workplace.

6. MEA will advocate for managers and leadership to support professional development goals for BIPOC employees seeking advancement and promotion. Targeted mentorship should be implemented and utilized to create more equity as part of succession planning in all City departments. In addition, data to evaluate the use of Acting Assignments as a part of an equitable strategy should be reviewed.
7. MEA will advocate and make recommendations for the creation of professional development and training programs to support the advancement of BIPOC employees into management and leadership positions.
8. MEA will advocate for making discussions about racial inequity, race and bias in the workplace safe for employees and managers to engage in. MEA recognizes that managers also experience racial inequity, discrimination and bias and will work with departments to develop a process that encourages dialogue that is two-way so that BIPOC managers also feel safe to bring up issues of inequity, discrimination and bias with their direct reports and department heads.
9. MEA expects members to set an example for all employees to follow. It is our responsibility to seek training and remain up to date on the City's racial equity, implicit bias and anti-discriminatory policies and procedures. Managers and department heads should implement and follow these policies and procedures in the spirit of eliminating discrimination, bias and inequity in hiring, discipline actions and treatment of BIPOC employees.

MEA commits to a collective future that requires that all of us - from managers and department heads, to City offices and agencies, to boards and commissions - to commit to fighting racism in all its forms.

Adopted: May 6, 2021