



December 20, 2017

VIA FIRST CLASS MAIL AND EMAIL

John Michael Mulvaney, Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20503
John.M.Mulvaney@omb.eop.gov

Re: Reports of harmful language restrictions in budget documents

Dear Director Mulvaney:

We write to request a meeting to discuss the extremely concerning reports that the Trump Administration has restricted federal agencies from using particular language in budget-related documents that will directly affect the ability of those agencies to serve lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people and everyone living with HIV. As the directors of the nation's leading advocates for the LGBT communities, Lambda Legal, the National Center for Transgender Equality, and the Human Rights Campaign, we take these allegations very seriously.

Specifically, it has been reported that on December 14, 2017, policy analysts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC") were instructed to avoid use of the words "transgender," "vulnerable," "entitlement," "diversity," "fetus," "evidence-based," and "science-based" in budget documents, and were told that budget drafts containing some of these words were being sent back to the agency for "correction."¹ In the same week, another agency within the Department of Health and Human Services ("HHS") was allegedly instructed by your office to avoid use of the words "vulnerable," "entitlement," and "diversity."²

These allegations are particularly troubling in light of this Administration's other attempts to harm the LGBT community by rendering us invisible, such as the refusal to gather data about sexual orientation and gender identity in the 2020 Census, American Community Survey, and various assessment tools for HHS and HUD programs serving seniors, people with disabilities, and homeless youth. Let us be clear: any attempt to limit the ability of federal agencies – particularly those charged with safeguarding public health – to serve LGBT people and everyone living with

¹ See Lena H. Sun & Juliet Eilperin, *CDC Gets List of Forbidden Words: Fetus, Transgender, Diversity*, WASH. POST (Dec. 15, 2017), <http://wapo.st/2kl2eeh> [hereinafter Sun & Eilperin, *CDC Gets List of Forbidden Words*].

² Lena H. Sun & Juliet Eilperin, *Words Banned at Multiple HHS Agencies Include 'Diversity' and 'Vulnerable'*, WASH. POST (Dec. 16, 2017), <http://wapo.st/2kkzh29> [hereinafter Sun & Eilperin, *Words Banned at Multiple HHS Agencies*].

HIV is unacceptable. Any effort to condition an agency's funding on discriminatorily denying services to LGBT people is illegal and we will hold the Administration accountable.

Our organizations have submitted requests pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act to get to the bottom of the extent to which the Administration has attempted to censor references to vulnerable, diverse populations like the LGBT communities and people living with HIV. As the agency that coordinates budget submissions, we call on the Office of Management and Budget, and you as its Director, to publicly repudiate any directive or suggestions to that effect, and to ensure that agencies are not directly or indirectly prevented from serving the public, including LGBT people. We request a meeting to discuss these matters and look forward to your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Rachel Tiven, CEO
Lambda Legal
120 Wall Street, 19th Floor
New York, NY 10005
P: 212-809-8585

Mara Keisling, Executive
Director
National Center for
Transgender Equality
1133 19th St. NW, Suite 302
Washington D.C. 20036

Chad Griffin, President
Human Rights Campaign
1640 Rhode Island Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20036-3278