

## BRIEFING ROOM

# FACT SHEET: President Biden to Take Action to Advance Racial Equity and Support Underserved Communities

JANUARY 26, 2021 • STATEMENTS AND RELEASES

## ***Administration to Purchase Additional 200 Million Doses to Be Delivered This Summer***

This afternoon, President Biden will outline his vision and new elements of his agenda for advancing racial equity for Americans who have been underserved and left behind. Equal opportunity is the fundamental promise of America. But systemic racism and discrimination in our economy, laws, and institutions have put the promise of America out of reach for too many families of color.

President Biden will renew the federal government's commitment to making the American Dream real for families across the nation by taking bold and ambitious steps to root out inequity from our economy and expand opportunities for communities of color and other underserved Americans.

President Biden will sign four executive actions this afternoon to advance racial equity and take first steps to root out systemic racism in housing and criminal justice. He will direct the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to take steps necessary to redress racially discriminatory federal housing policies that have contributed to wealth inequality for generations. The President will sign an Executive Order to end the Department of Justice's (DOJ) use of private prisons. He will recommit the federal government to respect Tribal sovereignty and strengthen the Nation-to-Nation relationship between the United States and Tribal Nations. And, President Biden will take action to combat xenophobia against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

These orders build on actions the President took during his first week in office to advance equity, which historians have described as one of the most robust efforts to advance racial justice in the first weeks of any new administration. On his first day in office, President Biden signed an unprecedented Executive Order establishing a whole-of-government initiative to address racial equity and support underserved communities, and redress systemic racism in federal policies, laws, and programs. He took immediate action to roll back harmful policies,

such as President Trump's 1776 Commission and ban on diversity and inclusion training for federal employees and contractors. In the days ahead, President Biden will reinvigorate the federal government's role as a model employer by expanding and building on the efforts of the Obama-Biden Administration, by requiring all agencies to take affirmative steps to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as by requiring accessibility.

President Biden committed to embedding racial equity across his Administration's response to COVID-19 and the economic crisis. In his first week in office, he signed executive actions to provide relief to American families that will aid families of color that are being disproportionately impacted by this economic crisis. He directed the Department of Agriculture to address the growing crisis of hunger facing more than one in five Black and Latino households by increasing access to nutritious food for millions of children missing meals due to school closures, issuing new guidance to help an additional 12 million Americans access nutrition assistance, and beginning the process to increase the value of supplemental nutrition assistance program benefits to better reflect today's grocery costs. The President extended the pause on federal student loan payments and collections, protecting borrowers burdened by educational debt, who are disproportionately Americans of color. He extended the federal government's foreclosure and eviction moratoriums until February 28, 2021, helping families who are more likely to be rent burdened to stay safely housed. President Biden directed the Department of Treasury to take steps to make the delivery of stimulus benefits more equitable to help the 8 million households, many of whom are families of color, who never received the first stimulus checks they were entitled to. And, the President began the process of requiring federal contractors to pay a \$15 minimum wage and provide emergency paid leave to workers bringing financial relief to low wage workers.

These actions are just the start. The President is committed to working with Congress to pass bold legislation that advances racial equity, including increasing funding for small businesses, investing in Historically Black Colleges and Universities and other Minority Serving Institutions, and tripling funding for Title I schools, which serve a majority of low-income students. As the President has said, he is focused on ensuring that small businesses owned by people of color and others who have been historically disadvantaged – many of whom were shut out of previous relief packages – receive support.

And President Biden's American Rescue Plan will provide immediate, direct relief to communities and families bearing the brunt of the crisis – including communities and families of color. Economists estimate that the investments in the American Rescue Plan will lift over eight million Black, Latino, and Asian Americans out of poverty and will provide relief across sectors where families of color are most disproportionately impacted in this crisis: in food and financial security, healthcare access, and education and child care. The President's rescue plan

will expand protections for frontline workers, 40 percent of whom are people of color. It will increase and extend Unemployment Insurance benefits, supporting the one in ten Black workers and one in eleven Latino workers who are unemployed. And, the plan will provide critical relief to Native American communities and Tribes.

Today, President Biden will sign additional executive actions to:

**Advance Fair Housing.** President Biden will sign a Presidential Memorandum “Redressing Our Nation’s and the Federal Government’s History of Discriminatory Housing Practices and Policies.” This memorandum recognizes the central role the federal government has played implementing housing policies across the United States, from redlining to mortgage discrimination to destructive federal highway construction, that have had racially discriminatory impacts. The Fair Housing Act requires the federal government to advance fair housing and combat housing discrimination, including disparate impact discrimination that appears neutral but has an unjustified discriminatory effect in practice. This Presidential Memorandum directs HUD to examine the effects of the previous Administration’s regulatory actions that undermined fair housing policies and laws. And, it directs HUD to take steps necessary based on that analysis to fully implement the Fair Housing Act’s requirements.

**Reform our Incarceration System to End the Use of Private Prisons.** More than two million people are currently incarcerated in the United States, and a disproportionate number of these individuals are people of color. Mass incarceration imposes significant costs on our society and communities, while private prisons profiteer off of federal prisoners in less safe conditions for prisoners and correctional officers alike. President Biden is committed to reducing mass incarceration while making our communities safer. That starts with ending DOJ’s reliance on private prisons. The Order directs the Attorney General not to renew Department of Justice contracts with privately operated criminal detention facilities.

**Reaffirm the Federal Government’s Commitment to Tribal Sovereignty and Consultation.** The Biden Administration is committed to re-establishing federal respect for Tribal sovereignty, strengthening the Nation-to-Nation relationship between the federal government and American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes, empowering self-determination, and advancing racial justice for Native communities. This Executive Order reinvigorates the commitment of all federal agencies to engage in regular, robust, and meaningful consultation with Tribal governments.

**Combat Xenophobia Against Asian American and Pacific Islanders.** While bullying and discrimination against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) is a long-standing and unacceptable problem in our country, rates of harassment and violence against AAPIs have

risen dramatically in the past year. President Biden will sign a Presidential Memorandum acknowledging the harm that these actions have caused, and establishing that the policy of his Administration is to condemn and denounce anti-Asian bias and discrimination. This Memorandum directs the Department of Health and Human Services, in coordination with the COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force, to consider issuing guidance describing best practices to advance cultural competency, language access, and sensitivity towards AAPIs in the federal government's COVID-19 response. It also directs the Department of Justice to partner with AAPI communities to prevent hate crimes and harassment against AAPIs.

###