



Office of the Secretary  
Washington, DC 20250

June 28, 2024

## USDA Equal Employment Opportunity Policy Statement

At the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), we are recommitting ourselves to the values of diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and equal opportunity for all. As Secretary, I am committed to working with leaders at all levels across the Department to intentionally build and advance a culture of belonging and excellence across USDA. It is USDA's mission to actively advance racial justice and equity by rooting out systemic discrimination and inequities and strengthening our civil rights programs while building trust within the Department.

As a Department, our core values of respect and dignity, equity and inclusion, trust and integrity serve as guiding principles that define appropriate behaviors and expectations for all employees, and direct decision making throughout all levels of the organization. No employee, former employee, or applicant for employment at the Department will be denied equal opportunity because of race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, disability, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, retaliation, or any other non-merit-based factor. Additionally, the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act requires agencies to provide reasonable accommodations to an employee's known limitations related to pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions, unless such an accommodation would pose an undue hardship to the agency. This is not only the law, but an essential component of the Department's mission.

All employees have the freedom to compete on a fair and level playing field with equal opportunity for available employment, advancement opportunities, and compensation. Equal employment opportunity (EEO) covers all personnel/employment programs, management practices and decisions, including recruitment, hiring, merit promotion, transfer, reassignments, training and career development, benefits, and separation. These civil rights principles are more than employees' rights by law—they are core values at USDA.

USDA strives to become a leader in EEO and a model employer. All USDA applicants and employees have the right not only to be free from harassment and discrimination but also to raise an allegation of harassment or discrimination and not fear reprisal. Any form of workplace harassment or reprisal against anyone who engages in protected activity will not be tolerated. USDA's recently issued [Departmental Manual 4200-003](#), *Anti-Harassment Procedure Manual*, reinforces the Department's requirement to respond to, address, and correct any harassing conduct before it becomes severe or pervasive. USDA will continue to timely process complaints of harassment, discrimination, and reprisal and provide robust EEO training to all employees.

Employees and managers will be held accountable for doing their part to ensure all USDA applicants are provided equal access to opportunities available throughout USDA. Accordingly, all senior leaders, managers, and supervisors must act in a manner deserving of the public's trust and with the utmost integrity in everything we do as public servants, leading always by example, treating everyone with dignity and respect, and promoting an ethical, equitable, and inclusive culture. All employees must comply with EEO principles as we perform the Department's mission.

Sincerely,

THOMAS J. VILSACK  
*Secretary*