



# NAACP

December 18, 2025

Mr. John T. Stankey  
Chairman and CEO  
AT&T  
208 S. Akard Street  
Dallas, TX 75202

## VIA EMAIL

Dear Mr. Stankey:

I write today with grave concern at AT&T's decision to discontinue its formal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs. This decision undermines not only trust in the company's commitment to fairness, but its economic viability and leadership in telecommunications.

In principle and practice, diversity, equity, and inclusion commitments have been mischaracterized in the current political environment. In direct contrast, the economic history of this country reflects a strong parallel in the growth of civil rights laws and the expansion of economic opportunity. Decades of civil rights laws and practices adopted by the corporate sector have greatly benefited the U.S. economy. Corporations benefit from expenditures by minority consumers and a diverse employee base.

Given this history, AT&T's decision to end diversity, equity, and inclusion commitments signals appeasement and a clear pivot toward an anti-growth and reactionary agenda. This decision is alarming because it runs counter to the expectations of consumers, employees, and the American public.

Black Americans' buying power is massive – now approaching \$2 Trillion dollars. Rather than valuing this market, AT&T has chosen to send a clearly ideological message: "AT&T does not value people of color as employees or customers."

This decision is not only disappointing but ill-considered. Management data reflect that diversity, equity, and inclusion are not symbolic commitments but performance-driving investments. AT&T's decision to eliminate DEI undermines future business advantages, potentially compromising innovation, profitability, employee well-being, and brand reputation.

Years of research data reflect that people of color utilize wireless services in proportions greater than their presence in the U.S population. African American, Hispanic, and Latino adults are more likely than average to use mobile phones as their primary or sole means of internet access. (Pew Research Center 2025).

This recent action stands in stark contrast to AT&T's economic interests, its customer base, and future growth. As the current administration has conditioned support of mergers and acquisitions on eliminating DEI, the American people have witnessed too many corporations abandon principled and moral commitments in favor of short-term political gain.

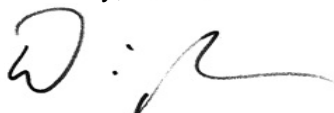
**National Association for the Advancement of Colored People**

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Our position is clear; consumers must align their spending with their values and patronize companies that value Black Americans and other people of color. The company's reversal on diversity, equity, and inclusion is profoundly disappointing.

AT&T has a significant responsibility and opportunity to ensure equitable access, representation, and inclusion both internally and in the communities you serve. Thus, we urge you to reconsider this decision and to reaffirm AT&T's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Johnson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Derrick Johnson  
President and CEO

cc: Brendan Carr, FCC Chairman  
Anna M. Gomez, FCC Commissioner  
Olivia Trusty, FCC Commissioner

## Why DEI Matters

- **Stronger performance and innovation:** According to research from McKinsey & Company, companies in the top quartile for ethnic diversity among executive teams have on average a **27% financial advantage** over less diverse peers. ([McKinsey 2023](#)).
- **Leadership diversity drives value creation:** Firms with gender-diverse executive teams are significantly more likely to deliver higher profitability and greater long-term value creation. (McKinsey 2023)
- **Innovation from diverse teams:** Teams that combine varied backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences tend to generate more creative, effective decision-making and better outcomes — benefits rooted not only in “diversity of identity,” but also diversity of thought, expertise, and life experience. ([Cornell University 2023 "Workplace Diversity"](#))
- **Reduced risk and improved stability:** A 2025 study by Catalyst together with a law-school research center found that more than **80% of C-suite and legal leaders believe scaling back DEI increases companies’ legal, financial, talent and reputational risks**. ([Catalyst 2025](#))
- **Employee retention and engagement:** The same study noted that companies supporting DEI are far more likely to retain talent; many employees — especially younger workers — say they would not apply or remain at a company that does not support DEI. (Id.)

## Why DEI Matters for Telecommunications Companies — and for AT&T

Because AT&T provides critical connectivity that disproportionately serves — and is relied on by — racial and ethnic minority communities, ending DEI makes little sense in serving growth markets.

- **High reliance on mobile/smartphone access among minorities:** Research shows that African American, Hispanic, and Latino adults — are more likely than average to use mobile phones as their primary or sole means of internet access. Pew has documented this trend for over 15 years ([Pew Research Center 2025](#)).
- **Digital divide remains real for broadband access:** In 2025, the FCC calculated roughly 19.6 million Americans lacked access to fixed, residential high-speed broadband — with higher proportions among Black American and Hispanic households. [BroadBand Now](#) estimated the 2025 gap at 26 million based on FCC overcounting.
- **Smartphone-based access often substitutes for home broadband:** For many in minority communities, smartphones remain the most feasible — and sometimes only — gateway to internet connectivity, online education, job applications, health information, and civic participation [Pew Research Center 2025](#).