



## **Federal Government Equity Improvement Act & Equity in Agency Planning Act**

*Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley (MA-07) and Ranking Member Jamie Raskin (MD-08)*

### **BACKGROUND**

Oversight Committee Democrats are working to ensure the federal government is transparent, accountable, and responsive to everyone it serves—not just those with easier access to government services and decision making. To that end, Ranking Member Jamie Raskin and Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley are reintroducing two bills to ensure federal agencies remain focused on promoting equal opportunity for all, including people of color, women, rural communities, individuals with disabilities, and others that have been systemically excluded from participating fully in economic, social, and civic life.

On his first day in office, President Biden signed Executive Order (E.O.) 13985, “Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government”—a historic commitment establishing a whole-of-government effort to serve the public more fairly and accountably by considering equity in all aspects of federal operations and eliminating barriers to equal opportunity for underserved communities. E.O. 13985 required, among other things, that federal agencies evaluate the challenges of providing services to underserved populations and work to better serve these groups, including by conducting assessments to identify barriers to equal opportunity and programmatic benefits.

With the Administration’s leadership, agencies made great strides in addressing these challenges. In April 2022, the Biden-Harris Administration took two key steps by releasing (1) agencies’ equity action plans that incorporated the results of their assessments, including next steps, and (2) the Equitable Data Working Group Report, which outlined recommendations for advancing the use of equitable data across the federal government. In December 2022, to further support implementation of the E.O., House Committee on Oversight and Reform Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney and Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley introduced the Federal Government Equity Improvement Act and the Equity in Agency Planning Act.

In February 2023, President Biden signed Executive Order 14091, “Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government,” to take additional significant steps on this important work. E.O. 14091 advances and expands the Administration’s equity agenda, including by establishing agency equity teams, a White House steering committee on equity, and an annual requirement for federal agencies to produce equity action plans alongside agency strategic planning and budgeting considerations.

As President Biden has said, the important work of improving the equitable provision of services for all Americans “is not a one-year project—it is a generational commitment.” In February 2024, House Committee on Oversight and Accountability Ranking Member Jamie Raskin and Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley reintroduced the Committee’s equity bills to codify several key ideas from the E.O.s and ensure that agencies continue this essential progress for years to come.

### **THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EQUITY IMPROVEMENT ACT**

The Federal Government Equity Improvement Act, led by Ranking Member Jamie Raskin, would improve federal agency performance by:

- permanently authorizing the Federal Chief Data Officer Council, which works to improve the quality, use, and management of data for evidence-based government operations, and ensuring that the Council's work facilitates fair and equitable outcomes;
- establishing an Equity Subcommittee of the existing Performance Improvement Council, which would serve as an interagency working group to facilitate the development and sharing of guidance, data, and best practices for providing government services fairly, and would be required to solicit input directly from those receiving such services; and
- establishing statutory requirements for an Agency Equity Advisory Team within each federal agency, led by the agency's Performance Improvement Officer and with representation from key internal agency offices.

## **THE EQUITY IN AGENCY PLANNING ACT**

The Equity in Agency Planning Act, led by Representative Ayanna Pressley, would amend various agency performance planning requirements to statutorily require that agencies prioritize improving the fair and equitable provision of services in setting agency goals. Specifically, the legislation would:

- require that agencies include at least one goal, or 20% of the total number of goals, whichever is greater, relating to improving the equitable provision of services when they submit the following statutorily required goals:
  - "General Goals" in Agency Strategic Plans
  - "Performance Goals" in Agency Performance Plans
  - "Priority Goals" that are a subset of agency Performance Goals; and
- require agencies to consult with NGOs and other stakeholders as they develop and revise their strategic plans and work towards their performance goals.