

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2506

September 8, 2025

The Honorable Jerome H. Powell
Chairman
Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System
20th Street and Constitution Avenue N.W.
Washington, DC 20551

Dear Chairman Powell:

I write with urgent concern regarding the rising rate of unemployment for Black women in the United States. The U.S. Federal Reserve has a statutory mandate to promote maximum employment and that must be true for all people, regardless of race and gender.¹ Given your role as Chair of the Federal Reserve Board of Governors, I write to you to request data about the impact of Black women's job loss on the U.S. economy and a response on how this issue will be addressed.

In August 2025, 6.7% of Black women faced unemployment,² which is above the already high national average of 4.3%.³ This disparity should not go overlooked as unemployment of Black women is a key metric of the health of the U.S. economy. Black women are more likely than any demographic group to be enrolled in higher education, represent the highest-growing group of entrepreneurs, and disproportionately serve as breadwinners for our families.⁴ When coupled with the fact that job openings and hires decreased overall since July 2024,⁵ you should see the current economic outlook as a glaring red flag that forbodes danger for the entire country.⁶

¹ 12 U.S. Code § 225a.

² *Economic News Release Table A-2. Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Race, Sex, and Age*, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t02.htm> (see August 2025).

³ *Graphics for Economic News Releases*, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/charts/employment-situation/civilian-unemployment-rate.htm> (see August 2025).

⁴ *Breadwinning Women Are a Lifeline for Their Families and the Economy*, Center for American Progress (May 9, 2025), <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/breadwinning-women-are-a-lifeline-for-their-families-and-the-economy/>; *Persistence and Resistance: Black Women Navigating Barriers in Higher Education*, The Century Foundation (Sept. 26, 2024), <https://tcf.org/content/report/persistence-and-resistance-black-women-navigating-barriers-in-higher-education/>; *Black Women are the Fastest-Growing Group of Entrepreneurs in the U.S.—Meet 3 Who Grew their Side Hustles into Successful Businesses*, CNBC (Feb. 18, 2024), <https://www.cnbc.com/2024/02/18/black-women-are-the-fastest-growing-group-of-entrepreneurs-in-the-us.html>.

⁵ *Economic News Release Table A. Job Openings, Hires, and Total Separations by Industry, Seasonally Adjusted*, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/jolts.a.htm>.

⁶ *US Job Growth Stalls: Just 73,000 Jobs Added in July, with 'Stunning' Downward Revisions to Recent Months*, CNN (Aug. 1, 2025), <https://www.cnn.com/2025/08/01/economy/us-jobs-report-july>.

A diverse labor market, inclusive of Black women, contributes greatly to the economy and the workplace. One study of more than 300 public companies found that diverse teams were more productive and yielded higher earnings.⁷ Another study found that women were able to secure workplace benefits like paid family leave, leading to better workplace rights, productivity, and retention from employees who felt more respected and valued from new family-oriented workplace policies.⁸ It is undeniable that Black women contribute significantly to this nation and this nation's economy.

For generations, Black women have called for our economic contributions to be recognized and valued. Sadie Alexander became the first Black woman to earn a Ph.D. in economics in 1921 and published pioneering research demonstrating economic barriers like unemployment as the causes of poverty in Black communities. Alexander's trailblazing advocacy for full employment inspired Coretta Scott King to take up the mantle of a federal job guarantee during the 1960s Civil Rights Movement. As Black women have gained greater economic rights and opportunities, we must ensure that progress is not erased. In 2022, Lisa Cook became the first Black woman to sit on the Federal Reserve Board of Governors. In the face of her illegal firing, I stand united with her and the independence of the Federal Reserve.

Black women unemployment has remained significantly high since March 2025.⁹ Mass federal workforce layoffs by the current Trump Administration have disproportionately impacted Black women, who comprise about 12% of the federal workforce compared to about 7% of the overall labor market.¹⁰ Furthermore, the attacks on diversity, equity, and inclusion have compounded the negative effects on Black women.¹¹ Economic barriers like hiring discrimination and wage disparities are more prevalent when employers are prohibited from valuing diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Trump Administration is harming the economy by causing the labor market to lose the wealth of knowledge, innovation, and skill that Black women have contributed to this nation. It is incumbent upon the Federal Reserve to adjust its approach to ensuring a fair economy in the face of fiscally irresponsible policies from the White House.

By no later than September 30, 2025, we request a response to the following:

1. How do the significantly disproportionate rates of Black women unemployment impact the economy? Please provide data on the impact of Black women's job losses on the U.S. economy and discuss how these racial and gender disparities in unemployment rates affect economic inequality.

⁷ *Why Diversity Matters*, McKinsey and Company (Jan. 1, 2015), <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/why-diversity-matters>.

⁸ *Paid Leave in America: An Economic Overview*, SHRM (p. 12) (Apr. 26, 2020), <https://www.shrm.org/content/dam/en/shrm/research/SHRM-Paid-Leave-Report.pdf>.

⁹ *Black Women's Unemployment is Rising. Economists Say it's a Warning Sign.*, 19th News (July 3, 2025), <https://19thnews.org/2025/07/black-women-unemployment-jobs-warning-sign/>.

¹⁰ *African American Women in the Federal Sector*, U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, <https://www.eeoc.gov/federal-sector/reports/african-american-women-federal-sector>; *Employment Projections: Civilian Labor Force by Age, Sex, Race, and Ethnicity*, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (see Percent Distribution 2024), <https://www.bls.gov/emp/tables/civilian-labor-force-summary.htm>.

¹¹ *Black Women Suffer Steepest Job Losses Even as U.S. Labor Market Remains Stable*, National Black Chamber of Commerce (June 12, 2025), <https://nationalbcc.org/detail/black-women-suffer-steepest-job-losses-even-as-us-labor-market-remains-stable>.

2. What steps will the Federal Reserve take to ensure it continues to uphold the mandate of maximum employment for Black women? Please provide a detailed plan of how the Federal Reserve plans to address the increasingly high unemployment rate of Black women.
3. Do you intend to continue to support the independence of the Federal Reserve, including from unlawful firings like that of Governor Lisa Cook?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Ayanna S. Pressley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ayanna" written in a stylized script and the last name "Pressley" in a more legible, though still cursive, font.

Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress