



Office of the Chief Executive Officer

New Orchard Road  
Armonk, NY 10504

June 8, 2020

The Honorable Karen Bass  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Cory Booker  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kamala Harris  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators Booker and Harris, and Representatives Bass, Jeffries, and Nadler:

In September 1953, more than a decade before the passage of the Civil Rights Act, IBM took a bold stand in favor of equal opportunity. Thomas J. Watson, Jr., then president of IBM, wrote to all employees:

*"...Each of the citizens of this country has an equal right to live and work in America. It is the policy of this organization to hire people who have the personality, talent and background necessary to fill a given job, regardless of race, color or creed."*

Watson backed up this statement with action, refusing to enforce Jim Crow laws at IBM facilities. Yet nearly seven decades later, the horrible and tragic deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and too many others remind us that the fight against racism is as urgent as ever.

To that end, IBM would like to work with Congress in pursuit of justice and racial equity, focused initially in three key policy areas: police reform, responsible use of technology, and broadening skills and educational opportunities. Our suggestions include:

**Police reform – new federal rules should hold police more accountable for misconduct.**

Congress should bring more police misconduct cases under federal court purview and should make modifications to the qualified immunity doctrine that prevents individuals from seeking damages when police violate their constitutional rights. Congress should also establish a federal registry of police misconduct and adopt measures to encourage or compel states and localities to review and update use-of-force policies. We also urge Congress to consider legislation such as the Walter Scott Notification Act, sponsored by Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina, which would require that states receiving federal funding report more details on the use of deadly force by law enforcement officers to the Department of Justice so that an accurate picture of such incidents is available for public scrutiny and analysis.

Several of these suggestions are included in the Justice in Policing Act of 2020 that you recently introduced. IBM welcomes your early leadership in announcing these proposals and stands ready to work with you and other Members of Congress, from both sides of the aisle, toward broad bipartisan legislation that can be enacted into law.

**Responsible technology policies – technology can increase transparency and help police protect communities but must not promote discrimination or racial injustice.**

IBM no longer offers general purpose IBM facial recognition or analysis software. IBM firmly opposes and will not condone uses of any technology, including facial recognition technology offered by other vendors, for mass surveillance, racial profiling, violations of basic human rights and freedoms, or any purpose which is not consistent with our values and Principles of Trust and Transparency. We believe now is the time to begin a national dialogue on whether and how facial recognition technology should be employed by domestic law enforcement agencies.

Artificial Intelligence is a powerful tool that can help law enforcement keep citizens safe. But vendors and users of AI systems have a shared responsibility to ensure that AI is tested for bias, particularly when used in law enforcement, and that such bias testing is audited and reported.

Finally, national policy also should encourage and advance uses of technology that bring greater transparency and accountability to policing, such as body cameras and modern data analytics techniques.

**Expanding opportunity – training and education for in-demand skills is key to expanding economic opportunity for communities of color.**

We need to create more open and equitable pathways for all Americans to acquire marketable skills and training, and the need is particularly acute in communities of color. At IBM, we see an urgent demand for what we call “new collar” jobs, which require specialized skills but not necessarily a traditional 4-year college degree. Such jobs can still be found today in fast-growing fields from cybersecurity to cloud computing. We urge Congress to consider national policies to expand the number and reach of programs such as:

**P-TECH** - Developed by IBM earlier this decade, P-TECH is a grade 9-14 school model where students earn both their high school diploma and a no-cost associates degree in a STEM field without incurring student debt. Today, 220 P-TECH schools are serving 150,000 students worldwide, with a heavy focus on students of color in educationally underserved areas in the United States. From Brooklyn to Chicago, from Dallas to Baltimore, these schools are creating real opportunities and real jobs for young people today. We should scale them nationally.

**Pell Grants** – Today Pell Grants are an important pathway for students of color to go to college. But there are virtually no Federal funds available for non-college skills training or job certification programs for in-demand New Collar jobs. Eligibility for Pell Grants should be expanded – including for incarcerated persons – beyond traditional four-year degree programs so that students with real economic need can build relevant skills through other education and training pathways that fit their life circumstances.

We offer these suggestions in the constructive spirit of problem-solving that has always defined our company and its people. We realize these measures are only a beginning, but IBM wants to help advance this nation's pursuit of equity and justice and we stand ready to work with you to advance policies that will help unify our country and advance our national purpose.

Sincerely,

*Arvind Krishna*

Arvind Krishna

cc:

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives  
The Honorable Steny Hoyer, Majority Leader, House of Representatives  
The Honorable James Clyburn, Majority Whip, House of Representatives  
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Minority Leader, House of Representatives  
The Honorable Steve Scalise, Minority Whip, House of Representatives

The Honorable Charles Grassley, President Pro Tempore, United States Senate  
The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader, United States Senate  
The Honorable John Thune, Majority Whip, United States Senate  
The Honorable Charles Schumer, Minority Leader, United States Senate  
The Honorable Richard Durbin, Minority Whip, United States Senate  
The Honorable Tim Scott, United States Senate