

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 18, 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:

We write with urgent concern regarding the unemployment rate in the United States, especially for Black women and men. The alarmingly high rates of unemployment in the Black community are a glaring red flag with negative implications for the broader economy. While we appreciate your written responses and public statements on this issue, it is critical that you take immediate action to fulfil the statutory mandate to promote maximum employment for all people, of all races and genders. To better understand how the U.S. Federal Reserve is responding to this crisis, we request a briefing for Members of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Black workers have seen a sharp increase in unemployment under the current economic climate due to policies implemented by the Trump Administration. In November, the unemployment rate for Black workers grew to 8.3%,¹ the highest it has been since the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, as previously warned, Black women's unemployment serves as a warning sign for the broader economy, which is now the highest it has been in four years at 4.6%.² Leading economists, including yourself, have directly referenced a range of different possible reasons for the current economic climate, including harmful immigration policies, as contributors to the dire economic outlook.³

When Black people are ignored and pushed out of the labor market, the entire country suffers. Our community comprises a significant majority of workers in the healthcare, retail, hospitality and accommodation, service and food industries.⁴ And Black leaders are shaping the future in every sector from entertainment and technology to academia and transportation. Our employment fuels local economies and global corporations. Thus, high unemployment costs our nation a wealth of expertise and growth. More specifically, high unemployment among Black households can cost more than one trillion dollars to the U.S. economy.⁵ As both the 2008 financial crisis and COVID-19 pandemic revealed, Black households serve as a signal for what is coming for the rest of the economy.⁶

It is critical that you address the unemployment crisis to confront persistent economic inequities. Black workers make twenty percent less than white workers, contributing to a racial wealth gap in which the median Black family has a net worth of \$24,520 compared to \$250,400, for the median white family.⁷ As you affirmed in writing, the increase in the unemployment rate widens existing disparities between labor market outcomes and results in increasing income inequality.

For this reason, the Federal Reserve should target the Black unemployment rate as a key strategy in fulfilling its statutory mandate.⁸

There are several ways the Federal Reserve Board of Governors and regional banks have addressed economic concerns in the past, ranging from expanding lending programs for small businesses and non-profits⁹ to publishing recommendations for labor force participation.¹⁰ The Federal Reserve has included breakdowns by industry when analyzing price stability and has begun including breakdowns by demographics when analyzing the labor market.¹¹ But it is not enough to simply analyze, there needs to be action. We again urge the Federal Reserve to ensure a fair economy that works for all, regardless of race and gender, in the face of fiscally irresponsible policies from the White House.

For Black families throughout our nation, gainful employment is a necessary key to unlock opportunity and prosperity. We appreciate your attention to this matter and are encouraged by public statements that underscore the importance of the statutory mandate to promote maximum employment. The Federal Reserve must comprehensively analyze the impact of Black workers' job losses and develop a strategic plan to confront this crisis. As a core function of Congressional oversight for the constituents we serve, we request a briefing for the Members of the Congressional Black Caucus to discuss high unemployment and solutions for the Black community and our nation.

Sincerely,



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress

- ¹ *Economic News Release Table A-2*, Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst02.htm>.
- ² *Employment Situation Summary Table A.*, Bureau of Labor Statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst.a.htm>.
- ³ *Transcript of Chair Powell's Press Conference*, Federal Reserve Board of Governors (Oct. 29, 2025), <https://www.federalreserve.gov/mediacenter/files/FOMCpresconf20251029.pdf> (p. 21).
- ⁴ *Race in the Workplace: The Black Experience in the US Private Sector*, McKinsey & Company (Feb. 21, 2021), <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/race-in-the-workplace-the-black-experience-in-the-us-private-sector>.
- ⁵ *Consumer Buying Power is More Diverse Than Ever*, Univ. Georgia Selig Ctr. Econ. Growth (Aug. 11, 2021), <https://news.uga.edu/selig-multicultural-economy-report-2021/>.
- ⁶ *Rising Unemployment Among Black Women is a Bad Sign for the Economy*, Time (Sept. 9, 2025), <https://time.com/7315624/rising-unemployment-black-women-economy/>.
- ⁷ *Wealth by Race of Householder*, US Census Bureau (Apr. 23, 2024), <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2024/04/wealth-by-race.html>.
- ⁸ *The Federal Reserve Could Help Make the Job Market Fairer for Black Workers*, Washington Post (June 15, 2020), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/06/15/federal-reserve-could-help-make-job-market-fairer-black-workers/>.
- ⁹ *What Did the Fed Do in Response to the COVID-19 Crisis?*, Brookings Institution (Jan. 2, 2024), <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/fed-response-to-covid19/>.
- ¹⁰ *Disparities in the Labor Market: What Are We Missing?*, Federal Reserve Board of Governors (Sept. 26-27, 2017), <https://www.federalreserve.gov/conferences/disparities-in-the-labor-market-about-2017.htm>. *Assessing Maximum Employment*, Federal Reserve of Boston (Sept. 25, 2025), <https://www.bostonfed.org/publications/research-department-working-paper/2025/assessing-maximum-employment.aspx>.
- ¹¹ *Monetary Policy Report to Congress*, Federal Reserve Board of Governors (June 20, 2025), https://www.federalreserve.gov/monetarypolicy/files/20250620_mprfullreport.pdf (see Box 1).