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A Special Message For All HHS Employees

The Department of Health and Human Services has, at the very core of our mission, responsibility for promoting the well-being of all Americans. The respect and dignity with which we treat each other here in the Department is crucial to the successful completion of this mission.

To foster an atmosphere of continuous improvement in our products and services, we must create an environment that fully utilizes the talents and capabilities of each and every one of us, from all backgrounds and at all organizational levels. And to do this, we must strengthen our commitment to a workplace that is free of discrimination or harassment of any kind -- a workplace where no one is denied the opportunity to contribute fully because of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, or sexual orientation.

My personal commitment to diversity and equality is longstanding and non-negotiable. Quite simply, diversity and inclusion are prerequisites to excellence. I am determined that this Department will always be viewed as a model workplace, where everyone has an equal opportunity to serve.

Let me be clear, both discrimination and harassment are violations of the law as well as the policies of this Department. If you feel you have been the victim of discrimination or harassment, contact your local equal employment opportunity office, local union representative, or servicing personnel office. In addition, your local employee assistance program can help resolve workplace differences and counsel employees who feel they are being treated unfairly.

However, our commitment must go far beyond compliance with anti-discrimination laws. I am asking for the support of all managers, not just in their hiring and promotion decisions, but also in welcoming responsibility for nurturing and capitalizing on the very best that every employee has to give. And I am asking all employees to understand that a culturally diverse workplace is critical to our mission to serve all Americans.

Celebrating cultural diversity will help us better understand each other and our customers. And with better understanding comes a greater capacity to serve. That is our real goal, and it is one that I know we can achieve.

Donna E. Shalala