

Illegal immigration has a host of economic impact...

Moms for Liberty co-founder warns parents M...

Donald Trump declares steel is top priority for US...

Donald Tru steel is top

HEALTH

Top public university’s ‘LGBTQ+ lab’ hit with race-bias complaint amid \$700K in Trump-era federal funding

UMD's Lavender Lab got nearly \$700K in new federal funding as a civil rights group challenges its race-based practices

By Elaine Mallon · Fox News

Published September 24, 2026 10:18am EDT

Comments

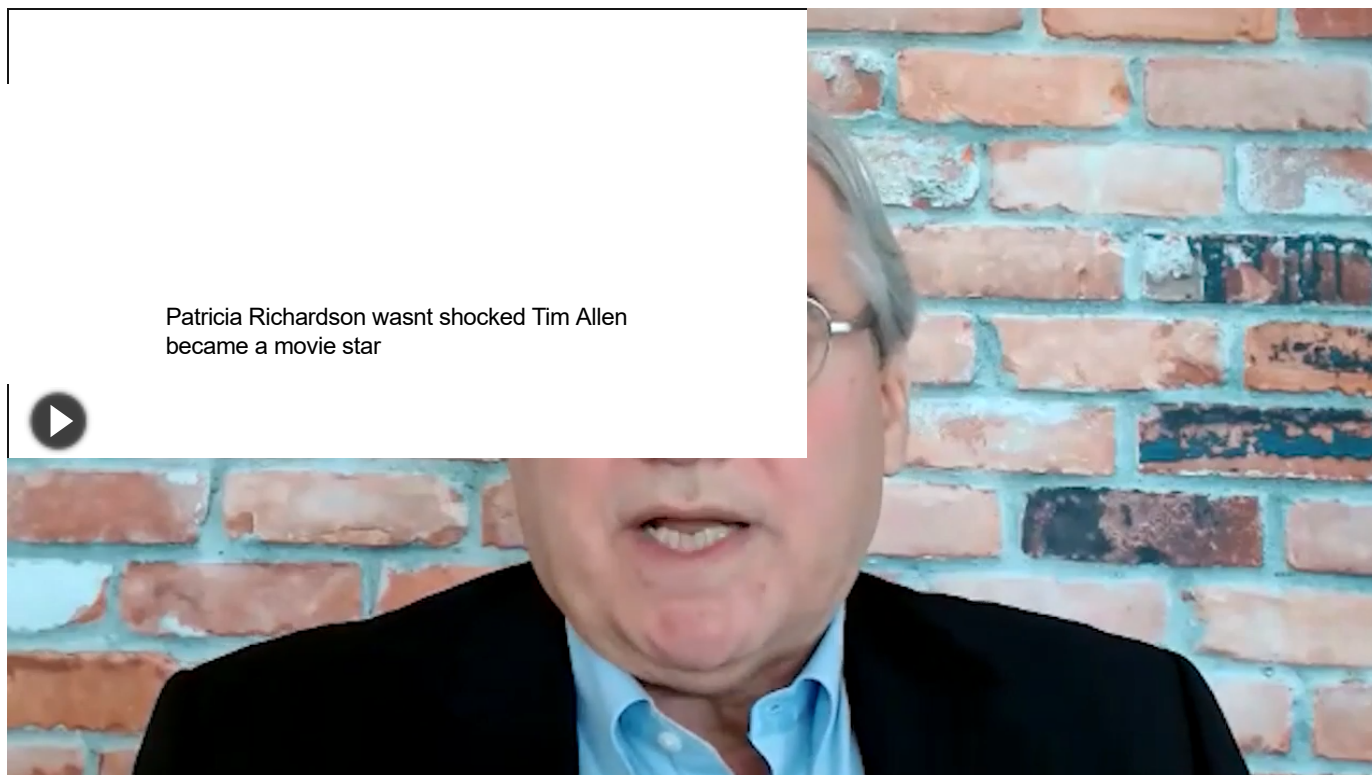
Add Fox News on Google

6

4

3

2



University of Maryland lab hit with civil rights complaint over alleged race-based practices

Equal Protection Project founder William Jacobson says the Lavender Lab's student board and research hiring practices warrant a federal civil rights investigation.

FIRST ON FOX: A [University of Maryland](#) research lab that received nearly \$700,000 in additional federal funding from the Trump administration this year is facing a civil rights complaint alleging that it uses race and ethnicity to determine access to some research-related opportunities.

The Equal Protection Project (EPP) filed the complaint with the Department of Health and Human Services' Office for Civil Rights against UMD's Lavender Lab, a National Institutes of Health (NIH)-funded lab that studies suicide, substance use and other health outcomes among LGBTQ+ people and Black, Indigenous and People of Color.

EPP is asking HHS to investigate whether the lab's LGBTQ+ Teens of Color Advisory Board and its research assistant selection practices give priority to non-White applicants.

"Some people may ask what is wrong with prioritizing non-whites in a program which is designed to study non-whites," EPP founder William Jacobson told Fox News Digital. "When you receive federal funding, you cannot discriminate in the administration of your programs."

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT LAUNCHES TITLE VI INVESTIGATION INTO DEI PROGRAMS AT ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY





The intersex-inclusive Pride Progress flag alongside a Transgender Pride flag on Jun. 10, 2024, in London, United Kingdom. The flag includes rainbow stripes representing LGBTQ+ communities, along with colors from the Transgender Pride Flag and colors representing people of color. (Mike Kemp/In Pictures via Getty Images))

"You do not need to have an advisory board, you do not need to hire research assistants based on race to fulfill the purposes of this grant," Jacobson continued.

The complaint comes as the Lavender Lab continues receiving millions of dollars through the NIH for research examining [alcohol and drug use](#) among "sexual minority adolescents of color."

One of the lab's principal projects, titled "Long-Term and Daily Associations Among Intersectional Minority Stress, Structural Oppression, and Alcohol Use and Misuse Among Sexual Minority Adolescents of Color," began in May 2022 and is scheduled to run through April 2027. The complaint cites approximately \$3.6 million in total federal obligations and roughly \$2.2 million in

provided another \$695,192 for the project for fiscal year 2026.

The complaint points first to the lab's LGBTQ+ Teens of Color Advisory Board, which said it was "specifically looking for teens in the US who identify as both LGBTQ+ and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) to join our board" in an Instagram [post](#).

A NEW YORK UNIVERSITY FACES JUSTICE DEPARTMENT INVESTIGATION OVER 'BLACK MALE INITIATIVE'



An aerial view of the University of Maryland campus in College Park, Maryland, on November 14, 2009. (G Fiume/Getty Images)

opportunities.

EPP also targeted the Lavender Lab's research-assistant program, which offers positions to undergraduate and master's-level students.

Although the positions are generally unpaid, the complaint stated that undergraduate research assistants may receive academic course credit, and some students may be able to participate through federal work-study. Research assistants generally commit to at least two semesters and a minimum of eight hours per week.

The lab stated it "especially encourage[s] and invite[s] candidates from traditionally marginalized backgrounds" to apply and that applicants with experience conducting research involving "LGBTQ and BIPOC communities" through "cultural humility, intersectionality, and social justice approaches" will receive the "strongest consideration."

"Discrimination based on [race or ethnicity](#) at institutions receiving federal funding is unlawful regardless of which group is targeted or benefits," Jacobson said. "Treating individuals as avatars of their demographic identity rather than as individuals with unique merits and circumstances undermines fairness, merit, social cohesion, and the rule of law."

TRUMP ADMIN'S PUSH TO SCRAP DEI IN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TAKES LANDMARK STEP WITH NEW HIRING RULE



THE EQUAL PROTECTION PROJECT
A Project of the Legal Insurrection Foundation
18 MAPLE AVE. #280
BARRINGTON, RI 02806
www.EqualProtect.org

September 22, 2026

BY EMAIL (OCRComplaint@hhs.gov)

Centralized Case Management Operations
U.S. Department of Health and Human
Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.

BY EMAIL

Paula Stannard, Esq.
Director, Office for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Health and Human
Services

EPP alleges that the language indicates race or ethnicity may play a role in the selection process. The complaint asks HHS to investigate whether the practices violate Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color or national origin in federally funded programs, as well as the Affordable Care Act.

"Because the Lavender Lab is operating under an HHS health care related grant, the non-discrimination provisions of the Affordable Care Act must be adhered to, and HHS has authority to enforce those provisions," Jacobson said.

"The conduct at the Lavender Lab calls into question whether HHS should be funding intersectionality-focused research at all," Jacobson said. "Intersectionality is a race- and ethnicity-focused group-identity approach. It is no surprise that where the focus is racial identity that programming could cross the line into civil rights violations."

Jacobson said EPP has found federal dollars going to programs that use intersectionality and is calling for tighter rules on that funding.

[SIGN UP TO GET THE POLITICS NEWSLETTER](#)

"We have identified [hundreds of millions of dollars](#) of federal funding for programs that incorporate intersectionality," Jacobson said. "Given the civil rights danger from an 'intersectional' approach, we call on the administration to issue a new executive order and agency guidance closing the '[intersectionality loophole](#)' by including intersectionality in the ban on [unlawful discriminatory DEI practices](#) in federal grantmaking."

[CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD THE FOX NEWS APP](#)

Fox News Digital reached out to the University of Maryland, HHS and the White House for comment.

Elaine Mallon is a writer for Fox News Digital and Fox Business covering national politics.

Related Topics

Health

Medical Research

Education Controversies

Campus Controversy

Diversity

Woke Culture

138 Comments

Join the conversation

Sign In

Top

Newest

J **Just One Guy**
4d

What could they possibly study in a "LGBTQ lab"? The physiology and biology of LGBTQ is IDENTICAL to the physiology and biology... **See More**



51



Reply

View 13 replies

J **Jessica Nichols**
4d

Stop funding universities. Let them be privately funded. They chare too much for tuition for the ROI. Professors are over paid.... **See More**



47



4



Reply

View 4 replies

J **jackiemom**
4d

The federal govt has no money to give - I don't understand why/how we can do this when 40,000,000,000 in debt...



38



2



1



Reply

View 4 replies

T **TheShadowBannedKnows**
4d

Easy fix. Stop giving universities our hard earned taxpayer dollars! There are enough wealthy people out there for them to put ... **See More**



40



1



Reply

View 1 reply

M **maryIndconservative**
4d

Agreed. The feds shouldn't be subsidizing anything at this point. Place it on the states while these universities sit on millio... **See More**



36



1



Reply

[View All Comments](#)

U.S.

Blue City Crime
Campus Radicals
Border Crisis
True Crime

World

U.N.
Conflicts
Terrorism
Disasters
Global Economy
Environment
Religion
Scandals

Media

FOX Nation Coverage

Politics

Donald Trump
Senate
House
Judiciary
Foreign Policy
Fox News Polls
Elections

Opinion

Entertainment

Dolly Parton
Royal Families
Country Music

OutKick

- OutKick Sports
- OutKick Betting
- NFL
- College Football
- MLB
- NASCAR
- NBA
- NHL
- Golf
- Tennis
- UFC
- WWE

Health

- Longevity
- Brain Health
- Weight Loss
- Sleep Health
- Cancer News
- Mental Health
- Heart Health
- Healthy Living

FOX Business

- Personal Finance
- Economy
- Markets
- Watchlist
- Lifestyle
- Real Estate
- Tech

Lifestyle

- Travel
- Food & Drink
- Faith
- Discovery
- Games & Quizzes

Deals

- Trending Deals
- Gift Guides
- Home Deals
- Kitchen Deals
- Tech and Electronic Deals
- Health and Fitness Deals
- Beauty and Fashion Deals

Science & Tech

- Air & Space
- Security
- Innovation
- Video Games
- Military Tech
- Planet Earth
- Wild Nature

Games

Scattergories Daily
5 Across the Letter Word Game
Downwords
Sudoku
Word Swap
Word Search
Icon Match
Daily Crossword Puzzle
Mini Crossword Puzzle

About

Contact Us
Careers
Fox Around the World
Advertise With Us
Media Relations
Corporate Information
Compliance

Watch Live

FOX News Shows
Programming Schedule
On Air Personalities
Full Episodes
Show Clips
News Clips

Apps & Products

FOX News Go
FOX Weather
FOX Nation
FOX Noticias
FOX News Shop
FOX News Radio
FOX News Newsletters
FOX News Podcasts
FOX One

Watch Live Sports on FOX One

Watch NFL Games Live
Watch College Football Games Live
Watch Seahawks vs Commanders Live
Watch Vikings vs Buccaneers Live
Watch Cardinals vs 49ers Live
Watch Illinois vs Ohio State Live
Watch Minnesota vs Washington Live

U.S.

- Blue City Crime
- Campus Radicals
- Border Crisis
- True Crime

World

- U.N.
- Conflicts
- Terrorism
- Disasters
- Global Economy
- Environment
- Religion
- Scandals

Media

- FOX Nation Coverage

OutKick

- OutKick Sports
- OutKick Betting
- NFL
- College Football
- MLB
- NASCAR
- NBA
- NHL
- Golf
- Tennis
- UFC

Politics

- Donald Trump
- Senate
- House
- Judiciary
- Foreign Policy
- Fox News Polls
- Elections

Opinion

Entertainment

- Dolly Parton
- Royal Families
- Country Music

Lifestyle

- Travel
- Food & Drink
- Faith
- Discovery
- Games & Quizzes

Health

- Longevity
- Brain Health
- Weight Loss
- Sleep Health
- Cancer News
- Mental Health
- Heart Health
- Healthy Living

FOX Business

- Personal Finance
- Economy
- Markets
- Watchlist
- Lifestyle
- Real Estate
- Tech

Games

- Scattergories Daily
- 5 Across the Letter Word Game
- Downwords
- Sudoku
- Word Swap
- Word Search
- Icon Match
- Daily Crossword Puzzle
- Mini Crossword Puzzle

Deals

- Trending Deals
- Gift Guides
- Home Deals
- Kitchen Deals
- Tech and Electronic Deals
- Health and Fitness Deals
- Beauty and Fashion Deals

Science & Tech

- Air & Space
- Security
- Innovation
- Video Games
- Military Tech
- Planet Earth
- Wild Nature

Watch Live

- FOX News Shows
- Programming Schedule
- On Air Personalities
- Full Episodes
- Show Clips
- News Clips

About

[Contact Us](#)
[Careers](#)
[Fox Around the World](#)
[Advertise With Us](#)
[Media Relations](#)
[Corporate Information](#)
[Compliance](#)

Apps & Products

[FOX News Go](#)
[FOX Weather](#)
[FOX Nation](#)
[FOX Noticias](#)
[FOX News Shop](#)
[FOX News Radio](#)
[FOX News Newsletters](#)
[FOX News Podcasts](#)
[FOX One](#)

Watch Live Sports on FOX One

[Watch NFL Games Live](#)
[Watch College Football Games Live](#)
[Watch Seahawks vs Commanders Live](#)
[Watch Vikings vs Buccaneers Live](#)
[Watch Cardinals vs 49ers Live](#)
[Watch Illinois vs Ohio State Live](#)
[Watch Minnesota vs Washington Live](#)

[Terms of Use](#) [New Privacy Policy](#)  [Your Privacy Choices](#) [Closed Caption Policy](#) [Help](#) [Contact Us](#)
[Accessibility Statement](#) [News Sitemap](#) [Video Sitemap](#)

This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed. ©2026 FOX News Network, LLC. All rights reserved. Quotes displayed in real-time or delayed by at least 15 minutes. Market data provided by [Factset](#). Powered and implemented by [FactSet Digital Solutions](#). [Legal Statement](#). Mutual Fund and ETF data provided by [LSEG](#).