

# Recording Academy CEO Promises Diversity, but Deborah Dugan Calls It 'Smoke and Mirrors'

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Hours away from the Grammys, interim CEO Harvey Mason released a memo to members of the Recording Academy outlining ways that the organization would increase diversity and inclusivity. But the plans were immediately slammed by legal counsel for ousted CEO Deborah Dugan, who says that the initiatives had already been agreed to under her leadership.

Mason's memo, which was sent out on Friday morning, says that the RIAA plans to hire a diversity and inclusion officer within the next three months, establish a fellowship that will oversee the progress of diversity initiatives, and a fund to assist "women in music" organizations.

"Six months ago, when I put my hat in the ring to be your Chair, I did so because I believed that the Academy could do better — could be better," Mason wrote. "The music we create has always reflected the best of ourselves and our world. But what was true of music has historically not been true of the music business as a whole. Too often, the industry and Academy have alienated some of our own artists — in particular, through a lack of diversity that, in many cases, results in a culture that leans towards exclusion rather than inclusion."

But these initiatives are not new, as they were recommended by a task force formed two years ago under Dugan and which Dugan said were being implemented before she was suddenly placed on administrative leave 10 days ago over claims of misconduct towards a female staffer.

Dugan's attorneys, Douglas H. Wigdor and Michael J. Willemin, reiterated this in a statement sent shortly after Mason's memo was published.

"Harvey Mason's public statement on the eve of the Grammys is all smoke and mirrors given that each of his so-called new "initiatives" had already been agreed to under the direction of Ms. Dugan. If the past ten days have shown anything, it is that the current Chair is not the appropriate individual to effectuate meaningful change at the Academy."

The statement accuses Mason of leaking attacks against Dugan to the media, specifically a statement released last week claiming that Dugan wanted "millions of dollars" in exchange for retracting her claims that the RIAA was a "boys club" that made it difficult to enact the reform she was hired to bring. She also accused the Grammys of having "corrupt" voting procedures beset with "conflicts of interest."

"In order for there to be real change four things must happen immediately," reads the statement from Dugan's lawyers." First, there must be an independent and qualified professional Chair and Board. Second, the Academy must agree to immediately suspend the conflict-rife nominating review committees ("secret committees"). Third, there must be a truly independent investigation into the Board's relationships, self-dealings, and use of public non-profit monies. Finally, the Board must immediately reinstate Ms. Dugan as the CEO of the Recording Academy to oversee and effectuate such changes."

The ongoing battle between Dugan and the RIAA was referenced by Sean "Diddy" Combs during his speech at the annual pre-Grammy gala on Saturday, in which he said that "Black music has never been respected by the Grammys."

"I'm officially starting the clock: you've got 365 days to get this sh- together," Combs said. "We need the artists to take back control, we need transparency, we need diversity. This is the room that has the power to [force] the change that needs to be made. They have to make the changes for us: They're a non-profit organization that is supposed to protect the welfare of the musical community. That's what it says on the mission statement: they work for us."