

Amazon to investigate allegations of discrimination following petition signed by 550 employees

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Amazon on Friday confirmed that it is investigating allegations of discrimination at the company's cloud-computing subsidiary, Amazon Web Services (AWS).

The tech giant is hiring an independent, women-owned/led investigative firm to look into concerns from employees working for AWS Professional Services, or ProServe, and will begin an assessment of the team, Amazon confirmed to FOX Business on Friday.

It is also launching a series of women's leadership circles so female employees can share their experiences.

The investigation and assessment come after The Washington Post first reported that at least 550 AWS ProServe employees signed an internal petition accusing AWS of having "an underlying culture of systemic discrimination, harassment, bullying and bias against women and under-represented groups."

The petition also alleges that the company's efforts to investigate discrimination claims are "not fair, objective or transparent," according to the newspaper, which is owned by Amazon founder Jeff Bezos.

Amazon shared an email that AWS CEO Adam Selipsky and Amazon CEO Andy Jassy sent to the petition's authors.

"I share your passion for ensuring that our workplace is inclusive and free of bias and unfair treatment," the email reads. "I can tell you we are committed to that outcome, as well as to specifically investigating any incident or practice that is inappropriate. I understand you are aware that, given the nature of the concerns here, we have retained an outside firm to investigate and understand any inappropriate conduct that you or others may have experienced or witnessed."

Selipsky and Jassy added that the investigative firm is "experienced and objective," and that Selipsky would personally review their findings.

Former AWS ProServe employee Cindy Warner published an open letter to Selipsky and Jassy on Friday, saying she had been terminated from her role on June 30 after filing a lawsuit against the cloud-computing company.

Warner mentioned the petition in her letter and said she is "honored and humbled that the petition identifies [her] as one of the people whose reports and experiences spurred [petitioners] to call for change in ProServe and AWS."

"It quickly became clear, as explained in my complaint, that our unit had a major sexism problem," Warner wrote in her letter. "Female team members would approach me on a near-daily basis asking for guidance on how to handle persistent discrimination and bullying by male managers and coworkers. The only other female L8-level employee at the time regularly came to me in tears, searching for ways to stop the abuse by her male colleagues."

The former AWS employee, who started working for the ProServe team in February of 2020, specifically named her "immediate boss, Todd Weatherby...and other white male leaders in ProServe" who she says were "effectively ignoring persistent issues of harassment and discrimination while putting up inclusive workplace window dressing."

An Amazon spokesperson said the company "conducted a thorough investigation into Ms. Warner's complaints as soon as she made them."

"To date, we have found her allegations to be unsubstantiated," the spokesperson said. "Amazon does not tolerate discrimination or harassment in any form and any situation, and employees are encouraged to raise concerns to any member of management or through an anonymous ethics hotline with no risk of retaliation. When an incident is reported, we investigate and take proportionate action, up to and including termination."