

Amazon employees petition company to investigate allegations of discrimination

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An internal petition circulated by Amazon employees urges the company to appoint an external investigator to review allegations of discrimination following a series of lawsuits against the Seattle-based tech giant, according to a copy of the petition obtained by The Hill.

The authors of the petition received a pledge from Amazon Web Services (AWS) CEO Adam Selipsky to launch the outside investigation, Amazon confirmed Friday.

The Washington Post first reported Friday on the petition and the response from Selipsky. The petition was signed by more than 550 employees, according to the Post.

Selipsky said the company has hired an outside firm to investigate and that he will “personally review their independent findings.”

“I share your passion for ensuring that our workplace is inclusive and free of bias and unfair treatment. I can tell you we are committed to that outcome, as well as to specifically investigating any incident or practice that is inappropriate,” he wrote, according to a copy of the email shared with The Hill.

Selipsky sent the email on behalf of himself and newly named Amazon CEO Andy Jassy.

Selipsky took over as AWS chief after the former head of the cloud-computing unit, Andy Jassy, became CEO of the company when founder Jeff Bezos stepped down from the top spot.

”Despite assertions from HR that the company ‘doesn’t condone harassment and discrimination’, and that claims investigated have been ‘unsubstantiated’, many staff have expressed concerns that the internal processes relied upon to investigate and defend AWS’s handling of these matters are not fair, objective or transparent, that the system is set up to protect the company and the status quo, rather than the employees filing the complaints,” the petition states.

The petition cites a lawsuit filed by Cindy Warner, a former employee in AWS’s professional services business unit, in May.

Warner alleges she faced verbal abuse and discrimination against her by a white male manager and that she was prohibited from applying for a higher-level role for which she was qualified. She also alleges that she was unlawfully fired in retaliation after her complaints.

“I am honored and humbled that the petition identifies me as one of the people whose reports and experiences spurred them to call for change in ProServe and AWS,” Warner wrote in a blog post Friday.

“Right up until my last day at Amazon, I held out hope that the company would decide to have a discussion rather than try to intimidate and wear me down. I was disappointed, but not silenced. I will pursue my claims as far as I need to in order to show Amazon how wrong management’s actions were. My wonderful colleagues at AWS will not be intimidated or silenced, either,” Warner added.

Warner was one of five women, ranging in age from 23 to 64, across Amazon’s corporate offices and warehouses to file complaints the same day in May against the company alleging gender bias discrimination.

The lawsuits followed one filed in march by Charlotte Newman, a Black Amazon manager, who sued Amazon over allegations of racial discrimination and sexual harassment.

In response to the lawsuits, a spokesperson for the company previously told The Hill it was conducting investigations but had “found no evidence to support the allegations.”