

# Amazon Probes Bias At Cloud Unit After Workers Sound Alarm

 [law360.com/employment-authority/articles/1405989/amazon-probes-bias-at-cloud-unit-after-workers-sound-alarm](https://www.law360.com/employment-authority/articles/1405989/amazon-probes-bias-at-cloud-unit-after-workers-sound-alarm)

By **Anne Cullen** · July 23, 2021, 3:58 PM EDT

Amazon hired an outside firm to investigate concerns employees raised in a recent petition of "systemic discrimination, harassment, bullying and bias" at a company unit that assists customers with its cloud-computing services.

In the internal employee petition sent to Amazon leadership last week — a copy of which was obtained Friday by Law360 — staffers at Amazon Web Services' professional services group ProServe said they face a culture of discrimination and mistreatment against women and minorities.

They also sounded the alarm about internal company processes for handling these claims, channels they said wind up protecting Amazon and upholding the status quo rather than rectifying worker mistreatment.

"These employees often find themselves in a vulnerable position once the complaint has been filed and the investigation has been closed," the workers said, calling for the company to launch an external investigation into "the current cultural and structural state of ProServe as it pertains to discrimination, harassment, and bias."

In response to the petition, Amazon Web Services CEO Adam Selipsky told workers in an email shared with Law360 that Amazon has retained an outside firm to get to the bottom of their concerns.

Selipsky said he's committed to "ensuring that our workplace is inclusive and free of bias and unfair treatment" and "specifically investigating any incident or practice that is inappropriate," in the message, which he sent on behalf of himself and Amazon CEO Andy Jassy.

"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 said. "This firm is experienced and objective, and I personally will review their independent findings, which will help guide any further actions."

The employee petition comes just a couple of months after a former executive for ProServe in California **said in a federal lawsuit** that the cloud-computing unit is a "boys' club where predominantly white male executives jealously guard their sphere of influence."

Former ProServe employee Cindy Warner said in her May complaint that women and minorities at the Amazon unit face obstacles to advancement as the "plum" positions are reserved for "white male friends and protégés of executives." Warner also said she was ousted after sending her concerns up the pipeline.

Warner is one of five women who worked for Amazon's warehouses and corporate offices that filed suit May 19 claiming discrimination and retaliation, all of whom are represented by Wigdor LLP as well as various local firms.

In light of the ProServe employee petition, Warner posted an open letter to Jassy and Selipsky on Medium on Friday arguing that the workers' call for an investigation "shows that my experience at Amazon is not unique and is emblematic of much larger problems at the company."

"The fear and pain of women and other underrepresented groups in ProServe are real," Warner said in the post. "These employees are crying out for help, and addressing this problem only helps the company in the long run."

Amazon has said it has already made some changes at ProServe in response to worker concerns about team culture, including hiring a women-owned and -led investigation firm to probe the workers' complaints and directing team leaders to kick off an assessment of ProServe's climate.

A company spokesperson also said Friday that it has "conducted a thorough investigation into Ms. Warner's complaints" and "have found her allegations to be unsubstantiated."

"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," the spokesperson said. "When an incident is reported, we investigate and take proportionate action, up to and including termination."