

Maryland

Trump administration orders dismissal of Md. state police civil rights case

The move to dismiss the case involving allegations of discrimination against Black and female officers is part of a larger effort to end Biden-era lawsuits meant to “advance a DEI agenda,” U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi says.

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By [Katie Mettler](#) and [Jasmine Hilton](#)

The U.S. attorney’s office in Maryland is moving to dismiss a federal civil rights case against Maryland State Police that accused the agency of discriminating against Black and female trooper applicants, a move ordered by the Justice Department.

The dismissal filing, made by the federal government in U.S. District Court in Maryland on Wednesday, did not give a reason for killing the case — nor did it explain how Maryland should proceed. The civil rights investigation was resolved months ago, when the state entered into a consent decree with the Justice Department, [agreeing to a \\$2.75 million settlement](#) and a host of changes.

It’s unclear what will happen to the payments or other requirements of the consent decree now that federal prosecutors have moved to end the case.

U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi said Wednesday that the Maryland case was one of several dismissals initiated by her office this week in an attempt to end Biden-era civil rights lawsuits meant to “advance a DEI agenda” and comply with President Donald Trump’s abolishment of diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives. The other cases — in North Carolina, Indiana and Georgia — also involved discrimination claims against Black and female job candidates.

The abrupt dismissal filing comes two weeks after the Trump administration fired Maryland’s U.S. attorney, Erek Barron, amid an effort to clear out federal prosecutors held over from the Biden administration.

Barron, a former state lawmaker and Maryland’s first Black U.S. attorney, [opened the investigation](#) into the state’s police agency in July 2022, saying at the time that lawmakers in the Maryland General Assembly had long heard complaints from Black troopers alleging discrimination from management.

The investigation found that Maryland State Police had used a written test that discriminated against Black candidates and a physical test that discriminated against female candidates, both violations of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The U.S. attorney's office and Gov. Wes Moore (D) did not respond to a request for comment on Thursday.

Maryland State Police Superintendent Col. Roland L. Butler Jr. said in a statement that the agency "will remain committed to enhancing recruitment and hiring practices to ensure fairness, transparency, and equal opportunity for all applicants."

It wasn't clear from Butler's statement if the Moore administration plans to independently proceed with the terms of the consent decree, but the superintendent said the agency will move forward with developing a new written and physical agility test — the focus of the discrimination investigation.

"The problem is not going away," said Maryland state trooper Anthony Alexander, president of the Coalition of Black Maryland State Troopers. He called on Moore, Butler and Maryland state lawmakers to keep pushing for reform within the agency, even if the federal government will no longer force them to.

"The stain is still there," Alexander said. "If they think this is a segue to not doing anything, they're wrong."

When the settlement was announced in late 2024, Butler called the terms "an improvement to our hiring processes" and said the agency will use the changes as "an opportunity to engage with experts to enhance our ability to assess new applicants and continue to have our Maryland State Police be the career of choice for every Marylander."

"The Maryland State Police is fully committed to meeting the consent decree guidelines set forth by the U.S. Department of Justice and remains fully dedicated to supporting our sworn personnel, protecting our communities, and serving the people of Maryland," he said in October.

Under the consent decree terms, which were approved by Maryland's Board of Public Works in October, Maryland State Police officials agreed to modify the agency's written and physical exams for new hires and provide federal officials with data on them to ensure settlement compliance. They also agreed to pay the \$2.75 million to applicants who were disqualified by the agency's discriminatory exams, and hire up to 25 of those people, as long as the applicants pass the new screening and selection processes.

The agreement required Maryland State Police to hire at least one outside party to develop new physical and written tests for the agency's hiring process and for the testing developers to be approved by federal officials. Separately, the consent decree mandated the appointment of a compliance officer to ensure Maryland State Police adhered to the changes.

In a news release, the Justice Department said the dismissed lawsuits, including in Maryland, "unjustly targeted fire and police departments for using standard aptitude tests to screen firefighter and police officer candidates."

Bondi said in a statement that public servants should be hired based on "skill and dedication to public safety — not to meet DEI quotas."

A few months after the Justice Department announced its inquiry, a group of state troopers filed their own lawsuit against the Maryland State Police in U.S. District Court in Maryland, accusing the agency of denying promotions for officers of color, imposing harsher penalties on them compared with White officers and allowing a work environment that subjected them to racist comments.

That case is ongoing.

“It will not affect our case one iota,” said Jay Holland, an attorney representing the troopers who filed the suit. “Whether this new administration has any interest in enforcing our country’s civil rights laws does not affect our interest in doing so for the state troopers who have been victims of illegal discrimination. We will continue to fight for the equal rights of our state troopers.”

Holland said the U.S. Justice Department found that Maryland State Police engaged in discrimination after a lengthy investigation and that the Justice Department has “no justification” to dismiss the case “after it’s been settled and Maryland State Police has agreed to remedy discriminatory practices.”

“These actions by the United States Government can only serve to undermine our monumentally important civil rights laws,” Holland said.

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