

# *DRAFT*

Dear Fellow Members,

These past few months have been difficult for us all, and we appreciate your understanding and patience through this transformative period in our industry. For the past 60 days we have worked hard to come up with a plan of action - culling ideas from the members as well as outside entities - to present a cohesive, comprehensive proposal. We have engaged in much-needed, deep introspection with the help and guidance of our outside advisors, experts in diversity and inclusion, and our media partners. Together, we have created a roadmap for transformational change in our organization.

As many of you know, in 1943, journalists from around the world, hoping to bring attention to the importance of film in foreign markets, created the Hollywood Foreign Correspondents Association and conceived the motto “Unity Without Discrimination of Religion or Race.” The past year has taught us that our association has a lot of work to do to fully realize this guiding principle.

We want to reaffirm our commitment to bringing Black and racially diverse members into our organization, which we feel can be accomplished by lifting many of the membership barriers, building pipelines with diverse journalist groups, and developing a long-term plan in partnership with a new Chief Diversity Officer. But beyond that we want to be clear that these changes touch every aspect of how we operate through five foundational pillars—Accountability, Membership, Inclusion, Good Governance, and Ethics & Transparency.

We feel positive about these changes. We believe they will lead us on the path to a brighter future for the association. Please find these recommendations ahead of our membership meeting, where we will discuss our plan in more detail.

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## **Foundational Pillars of Change**

There are five foundational pillars of change that have informed the below recommendations.

**Accountability:** Fundamental, structural changes to the organization as well as enhancing financial and ethical accountability.

**Membership:** Revision of membership eligibility and reaccreditation criteria, including substantial increase in size of membership, and removing impediments to diversity.

**Inclusion:** Increasing racial diversity in membership and at the Board level.

**Good Governance:** Substantial Board, management, and committee reform.

**Ethics & Transparency:** High ethical and accountability standards, including a new code of conduct, confidential reporting for internal and external parties, and new grievance procedures with clearly defined consequences.

### **1. Accountability**

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- The Board will take more serious measures, including but not limited to the Board resigning, if the membership does not timely approve and implement the below reforms.
- Immediately establish independent review committee to the Board (“Accountability Board” or “Oversight Board”) consisting of racially and ethnically diverse members who will advise the Board and oversee critical organizational reform.
  - *Possible members of this committee to include: representatives from the industry, members of diverse journalistic organizations, and a DEI consultant.*
- Hold new Board elections under new Bylaws no later than September 1, 2021.
- All current members will be required to meet the same standards as incoming members for reaccreditation of their membership.

### **2. Membership**

- Admit *at least* 20 new members in 2021, with a specific focus on recruiting Black members and building an environment to allow for their success, and with a goal of increasing the membership by 50% over the next 18 months. We will continue to reassess further increases to the membership with a specific focus on recruiting Black members and members from other underrepresented groups in each class.
- Revision of the membership eligibility criteria and admissions process.
  - Eliminate the Southern California residency requirement and expand eligibility to any qualified journalist living in the U.S. who work for a foreign publication.
  - Expand eligibility to journalists who are members of credible media organizations (not exclusively the MPA) and create a pipeline of racially diverse journalists.
  - Open membership to journalists who work in media beyond print.
  - Eliminate the sponsorship requirement and authorize alternative methods for member induction, including by expanding the role of the credentials committee and include third parties on that committee from credible journalistic and other organizations focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion.
  - Remove restrictions on the number of members admitted per year.
  - Re-confirm that there are no limitations on the number of members from each territory.
  - Develop objective criteria governing the admissions process and involve third parties in the decision-making process.
  - Publicize the modified admissions criteria on the HFPA website and at HFPA events.
  - Eliminate the distinction between New Members and Active Members so that New Members receive immediate rights and privileges.

### **3. Inclusion**

- Develop a comprehensive and long-term strategy for the recruitment of racially diverse journalists, which will include partnerships with credible journalistic and other organizations focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion, journalism schools, and other industry professionals whereby aspiring and early career journalists are mentored by members of the Association with the goal of becoming members.

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- Immediately retain Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion consultant.
- Develop a comprehensive DEI strategy.
- Mandate regular implicit bias and sexual harassment trainings for all members, the first of which DEI trainings was conducted on April 26, 2021.
- Enhance the HFPA's philanthropic outreach, and focus its messaging on its website and social media accounts, including during the Golden Globes and in public statements, to enhance its existing focus on support of racially diverse and under-represented communities.

#### **4. Good Governance**

- Hire a professional management staff, including, but not limited to, a Chief Executive Officer, Chief Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer, Chief Human Resources Officer, and Chief Financial Officer, with the goal of having the Chief Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer in place by September 1, 2021.
- Expand the size of the Board, create an Executive Committee of the Board, and increase the Board's governance authority and responsibility.
- Allow non-HFPA members to serve on the Board.
- Strengthen term limits for officers and directors; lengthen Board terms and introduce staggered terms.
- Emphasize the distinction between governance and management.
- Reform the committee structure.

#### **5. Ethics & Transparency**

- Revise the code of conduct in the following ways:
  - Define prohibited behavior and add policies, procedures, and training around non-discrimination, anti-harassment, sexual misconduct, and professional conduct standards.
  - Include sections governing membership and conflicts.
  - Tie violations of the code of conduct to the updated grievance procedure.
  - Set forth clear disciplinary consequences for violating policies.
  - Make the Code publicly available.
- Create a new confidential reporting system and grievance procedure by doing the following:
  - Immediately implement an accessible reporting mechanism for those inside and outside the HFPA, including an anonymous, third-party hotline, easily accessible through the HFPA website. Hotline will be open and available as soon as possible for the reporting of past, present, and future conduct violations.
  - A third party will commence investigation of all hotline claims within 14 days of receipt.
  - Establish a clear process for determining appropriate sanctions.

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- Eliminate the Board and member vote required to impose sanctions on grievances and instead rely on the findings of independent investigations and clear predefined sanctions, including but not limited to suspension or expulsion.
- Establish strong confidentiality protections and an anti-retaliation policy.
- List HFPA members on the HFPA website, along with their biographies, publications, affiliations, and links to previous works.
- Review press conference procedures, including consulting with publicists.
- Review structure of press travel.
- No longer accept promotional items.
- Strengthen conflict of interest disclosures.

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We know that the past few months have presented many challenges for our members, and we appreciate all of the time and effort you have invested in this process thus far.

We want to be clear – these outlined changes are just the first steps in the long journey ahead. We also know that in this existential moment for our association, change is difficult and sometimes scary.

The Board, as well as our outside partners, wholeheartedly endorse this reimagination of our organization. We must meet this moment, knowing that if we join together in support, we can become a better organization and, with hard work, an example of diversity, transparency and accountability in the industry for others to follow, just as our founders imagined almost 80 years ago.

Sincerely,

The Board Members of the HFPA