Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies
633 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20004

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Faisal D'Souza, NCO
Office of Science and Technology Policy
2415 Eisenhower Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22314

Re: Request for Information on the Development of an AI Action Plan

The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, America's Black think tank, provides compelling and actionable policy solutions to eradicate persistent and evolving barriers to the full freedom of Black people in America.[1] As a trusted forum for leading experts and scholars, we engage in major public policy debates and promote ideas that advance Black communities through evidence-based research, analysis, convenings, and strategic communications.[2]

As artificial intelligence (AI) rapidly transforms the economy and workforce, its impact on Black communities must be a central consideration in national AI policy. The Trump administration's recent efforts to bolster U.S. leadership in AI—including Executive Order 14179, "Removing Barriers to American Leadership in Artificial Intelligence,"[3] and the proposed $500 billion "Stargate Project"[4]—signal a strategic push to maintain the nation's AI competitiveness. While these initiatives focus on fostering innovation and economic growth, they must also ensure that AI serves as a tool for economic mobility rather than reinforcing existing bias and economic disparities. Without targeted policies, AI-driven automation could displace Black workers at disproportionate rates, widen the wealth divide, and limit access to high-paying AI-driven careers and entrepreneurship opportunities.

At this critical juncture, the Trump administration's AI Action Plan must take a bold, comprehensive approach that recognizes both the risks and opportunities AI presents for various communities. The following comments highlight (1) the economic risks posed by AI-driven workforce disruptions, particularly in industries that employ a high percentage of Black workers, (2) the impact of AI on the wealth divide and the urgency of economic protections to prevent further disparities (3) the ways AI can drive economic growth for Black workers and entrepreneurs if intentional policies are implemented, and (4) policy recommendations that ensure that national AI policy prioritizes fairness, workforce resilience, and economic inclusion.

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[1] Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, *Mission Statement*, https://jointcenter.org/about/mission-statement/ (last visited Mar. 12, 2025).
[2] *Id*.
[3] The White House, *Removing Barriers to American Leadership in Artificial Intelligence* (Jan. 23, 2025), https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/removing-barriers-to-american-leadership-in-artificial-intelligence/.
[4] *Announcing the Stargate Project*, OpenAI (Jan.21, 2025) https://openai.com/index/announcing-the-stargate-project/.

By addressing these challenges, AI policy can be structured to promote shared prosperity—turning one of the most promising technological advances of the 21st century into a technology that can bridge one of the most long-standing problems in the United States, racial economic inequality for African Americans.

AI-Driven Workforce Disruptions: A National Competitiveness Issue

The rapid advancement of AI-driven automation presents both opportunities and challenges for the U.S. economy. While AI has the potential to increase productivity and spur innovation, its unchecked deployment threatens to displace millions of workers, particularly in industries that disproportionately employ Black workers. If not properly managed, this technological shift could widen the racial wealth divide, increase unemployment, and weaken the nation's labor force participation rate—undermining the very economic strength that AI is meant to enhance. The Trump Administration's AI policy seeks to position the U.S. as a leader in artificial intelligence, but without strategic workforce planning and targeted policy interventions, AI could accelerate labor market inequities in multiple key sectors:

a. Transportation and Warehousing

One of the industries most at risk is transportation and warehousing, where automation is rapidly reshaping logistics, trucking, and delivery services. Black workers make up a significant share of this workforce, particularly in roles such as truck drivers and warehouse operators. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 22.5% of Black workers in this sector face a high risk of job displacement due to AI-powered automation.[5] Autonomous trucking and AI-managed logistics operations are already being tested,[6] and as these technologies become more widely adopted, they could significantly reduce the demand for human labor, eliminating well-paying, stable jobs that have historically provided pathways to the middle class for Black workers.

b. Retail

Similarly, retail jobs—where Black workers make up 12.5% of the workforce[7]—are rapidly being replaced by AI-driven automation. Self-checkout systems[8] and cashier-less stores[9] are becoming the norm, reducing the need for human retail employees. The United States Government Accountability Office warns that workers with lower levels of formal education and those in highly routine jobs—such as cashiers or clerical workers—are at risk of automation-

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[5] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey*, https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat18.htm (last visited Mar. 11, 2025).
[6] Jade Brasher, *How Autonomous Trucking is Already Transforming Logistics*, Fleet Owner (Oct. 31, 2024), https://www.fleetowner.com/technology/article/55239477/how-autonomous-trucking-is-already-transforming-logistics.
[7] D. Augustus Anderson, *Retail Jobs Among the Most Common Occupation*, U.S. Census Bureau (Sep. 8, 2020), https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2020/09/profile-of-the-retail-workforce.html.
[8] Esther Yoon-Ji Kang, *Self-checkout Lanes Impact Black and Brown Workers,* WBEZ Chicago (May 10, 2023), https://www.wbez.org/race-class-communities/2023/05/10/self-checkout-hurts-black-and-brown-labor-market.
[9] Rajeev Sharma, *AI in Cashier-less Technology: Revolutionizing the Retail Industry*, Markovate (Nov. 28, 2024) https://markovate.com/ai-in-cashier-less-technology/.

related job loss.[10] Without proactive interventions, the automation of these roles will exacerbate existing employment disparities and further shrink economic mobility for Black communities.

c. Administrative Support

Administrative support is another key sector facing significant disruption, with Black women disproportionately represented in these roles. In 2024, Black women made up 15.3% while Black men made up 7.1% of the workforce in office and administrative support occupations.[11] However, rapid advancement in AI is replacing many of these positions, creating a heightened risk of job displacement.[12] This shift is particularly concerning for Black women, who often rely on administrative roles as a stable source of employment.[13] If AI adoption continues without policies to reskill and transition affected workers into new opportunities, it will result in widespread job losses that disproportionately impact Black women.

The larger economic impact of these disruptions cannot be overstated. A shrinking labor force participation rate, particularly among historically marginalized workers, will have cascading effects on consumer spending, housing stability, and overall economic growth.[14] If entire sectors of the workforce are displaced without alternative pathways to employment, the U.S. risks falling behind in global competitiveness by failing to fully utilize its labor market potential.[15] Additionally, economic instability among displaced workers could increase reliance on social safety nets, placing further strain on government resources.

AI, the Wealth Gap, and the Urgency of Economic Protections

The impact of AI-driven workforce disruptions cannot be fully understood without considering the existing racial wealth divide and the financial vulnerability of Black communities. Black households face severe economic insecurity, making job displacement due to automation particularly devastating. The median household wealth for Black families is just $44,890— compared to $285,010,200 for White families.[16] This staggering disparity in wealth accumulation

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[10] U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Workforce Innovation: Insights into Skills and Training Programs for Impacted Workers*, at 5 (Aug. 2022) https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-22-105159.pdf (emphasizing "an occupation that features basic use of numbers, such as a cashier, might be replaced with self-checkout machines, leading to decreased demand for that occupation.").

[11] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employed Persons by Occupation, Race, Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity, and Sex,* at 1 (2024), https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat10.pdf.

[12] John Kell, *How Software Companies are Developing AI Agents and Preparing their Employees for the Next Wave of Generative AI,* Business Insider (Mar. 4, 2025), https://www.businessinsider.com/generative-ai-evolution-software-companies-develop-ai-agents-workforce-2025-3.

[13] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *supra* note 11.

[14] *See How Does Consumer Spending Impact the Health of the Economy, U.S. Bank (Mar. 4, 2025),* https://www.usbank.com/investing/financial-perspectives/market-news/consumer-spending.html.

[15] *See e.g.,* Taylor Nicole Rogers, *The Fight Over Robots Threatening American Jobs*, Financial Times (Jan. 8, 2025), https://www.ft.com/content/eb11f69c-e45c-4f23-8793-0ca5866b4b67.

[16] Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, *reater Wealth, Greater Uncertainty? Changes in Racial Inequality in the Survey of Consumer Finances*, FEDS Notes (Oct. 23, 2023), https://www.federalreserve.gov/econres/notes/feds-notes/greater-wealth-greater-uncertainty-changes-in-racial-inequality-in-the-survey-of-consumer-finances-accessible-20231018.htm#fig1.

leaves Black workers with fewer financial buffers to withstand economic shocks, including those caused by AI-driven job losses.

Another way of looking at economic security is examining asset poverty, which is defined as the inability to sustain a household for three months without income.[17] One study found that 44% of Black households are asset poor, compared to just 16% of White households.[18] This means that almost half of all Black families lack the financial resources to navigate periods of unemployment, making job displacement due to automation an immediate crisis rather than a temporary setback. Without targeted interventions, AI-driven job losses will push more Black families into economic precarity, worsening long-term financial instability and deepening generational poverty.

The consequences of AI-driven labor market disruptions extend beyond individual job losses— they undermine pathways to economic mobility.[19] Historically, middle-class job opportunities in transportation, retail, and administrative support roles have allowed Black workers to achieve greater financial security despite broader economic inequities. As automation eliminates these positions, there is greater opportunity for increased economic insecurity. In addition, this creates new barriers to wealth-building, limiting access to homeownership, retirement savings, and upward mobility for future generations. Without intervention, the racial wealth divide will only widen as Black workers are displaced from stable industries without access to comparable pathways to greater economic opportunity.

AI as an Economic Growth Opportunity for Black Workers & Entrepreneurs

While AI-driven automation threatens job security and economic stability for many Black workers, it also presents a powerful opportunity for economic mobility—if access to AI-driven jobs and entrepreneurship are expanded with significant intention. AI is already driving job creation in high-growth, high-paying fields like machine learning, data science, and AI ethics,[20] yet Black workers remain severely underrepresented in these sectors. Additionally, AI-powered innovation is shaping the future of business and entrepreneurship, but Black founders continue to face significant barriers to capital and scaling opportunities. Without intentional policy interventions, AI could deepen existing societal fissures, further limiting access to the wealth-building potential of the digital economy. However, if AI policies are intentional and have a laser

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[17] Yunju Nam, Jin Huang, & Micheal Sherraden, *Assets, Poverty, and Public Policy: Challenges in Definition and Measurement,* Center for Social Development Washington University (Dec. 28, 2008) https://aspe.hhs.gov/reports/assets-poverty-public-policy-challenges-definition-measurement-0#Introduction.

[18] Prosperity Now, *Financial Assets & Income: Asset Poverty Rate* (2021), https://scorecard.prosperitynow.org/data-by-issue#finance/outcome/asset-poverty-rate (last accessed on Mar. 12, 2025).

[19] *See* Sam Manning, *AI's Impact on Income Inequality in the U.S.,* The Brookings Institution (Oct. 26, 2023), https://www.brookings.edu/articles/ais-impact-on-income-inequality-in-the-us/ ("How will society be organized, income distributed, human agency preserved, and prosperity equitably shared in a world where machines outperform us in every dimension, even those that we haven't yet conceived of? Addressing these challenges will be crucial to ensuring that the transformative potential of AI benefits all members of society and does not harmfully exacerbate inequalities.").

[20] Eakansh Srvastava, *The Impact of AI and Machine Learning on Data Science Careers*, LinkedIn (Feb. 2024), https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/impact-ai-machine-learning-data-science-careers-eakansh-srivastava-jfnoc/

focus on education, training and increasing access to capital for all communities, this emerging technology can become a force for economic empowerment rather than exclusion.

a. Bridging the AI Employment Gap: Expanding Representation in High-Paying AI Fields

AI-driven job growth is concentrated in STEM fields such as software engineering, AI ethics, cybersecurity, and robotics, yet Black workers remain disproportionately underrepresented in these high-paying careers. Only 4.7% of software engineers are Black,[21] and Black workers hold just 9% of all STEM jobs,[22] despite making up nearly 13% of the U.S. workforce. [23] These statistics are not just a workforce issue—it's an economic mobility crisis. As AI reshapes the job market, those with access to AI-related careers will benefit from increased wages and economic stability, while those without will face displacement and financial precarity. Without deliberate intervention, the racial wealth divide will continue to widen if Black workers are not included in the growing AI economy.

b. Breaking Barriers: Supporting Entrepreneurs in AI & Tech Innovation

Beyond employment, AI is reshaping the entrepreneurial landscape, creating new opportunities for business innovation. From AI-driven automation tools that streamline operations to AI-powered predictive analytics that enhance business decision-making, entrepreneurs who leverage AI will have a competitive edge in the digital economy. However, Black entrepreneurs face systemic barriers to accessing the capital needed to innovate and scale AI-driven businesses.

According to Crunchbase, Black founders received only 0.48% of all venture capital funding in 2023, despite the explosive growth of AI startups.[24] Additionally, "only 3.1% of startups that raise venture funding are Black-owned, and Black startups receiving funding raise half as much as others."[25] This chronic underinvestment in Black entrepreneurship prevents many Black innovators from building and scaling AI-powered businesses, limiting their participation in the AI economy.

c. Building AI Workforce Resilience Through Education & Training

As AI continues to reshape the job market, investing in AI workforce training is essential to ensuring economic prosperity for all communities. Many AI-driven roles require specialized skills, but without increased access to AI education, Black workers will remain disproportionately impacted by automation. To combat this, policymakers must expand AI

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[21] Rebekah Bastian, *Why Representation Matters When Building AI*, Forbes (Mar. 2021), https://www.forbes.com/sites/rebekahbastian/2021/03/28/why-representation-matters-when-building-ai/.
[22] Adam Zewe, *Can Machine Learning Bring More Diversity to STEM?,* Harvard School of Engineering (Jul. 9, 2021), https://seas.harvard.edu/news/2021/07/can-machine-learning-bring-more-diversity-stem.
[23] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Force Characteristics by Race and Ethnicity, 2022*, U.S. Dep't of Labor (Nov. 2023), https://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/race-and-ethnicity/2022/.
[24] Dominic-Madori Davis, *Funding to Black Founders was Down in 2023 for the Third Year in a Row,* TechCrunch (Jan. 17, 2024) https://techcrunch.com/2024/01/17/funding-black-founders-down-in-2023/
[25] Lisa D. Cook, Matt Marx & Emmanuel Yimfor, *Funding Black High-Growth Startups*, Columbia Business School (Mar. 28, 2023), https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4279986#.

training programs through a broad range of educational institutions, including but not limited to historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), community colleges, and vocational schools.

Policy Recommendations to Ensure Inclusive AI Development

In light of President Trump's recent initiatives to bolster U.S. leadership in artificial intelligence (AI), including the signing of Executive Order 14179, "Removing Barriers to American Leadership in Artificial Intelligence" and the announcement of the $500 billion "Stargate Project" aimed at massive AI infrastructure investment, it is imperative to align policy recommendations that address AI-driven workforce disruptions and promote economic prosperity for African American workers. While these initiatives focus on maintaining U.S. competitiveness in AI, they must also ensure that technological advancements contribute to economic mobility rather than reinforcing existing issues.

The following policy recommendations are designed to integrate workforce resilience, STEM education, entrepreneurship, and AI accountability into the administration's AI action plan to ensure Black communities are a part of the nation's economic growth:

1. **Integrate Workforce Impact Assessments into AI Initiatives**

With the administration's focus on AI deployment, it is crucial to proactively address workforce disruptions and create pathways to employment for those at risk of displacement.

- *Conduct Comprehensive Workforce Impact Assessments*: Before implementing AI-driven automation, federal agencies must assess job displacement risks where there could be a disproportionate impact on Black workers and other economically vulnerable groups.. These assessments should inform targeted policy interventions.
- *Develop AI Workforce Transition Plans*: Establish strategic reskilling and transition programs that retrain affected workers, ensuring they have clear pathways into high-demand AI-driven industries.
- *Ensure AI-Related Job Growth Includes Underrepresented Groups*: As AI reshapes the labor market, policies must incentivize hiring practices in AI-related fields to ensure underrepresented workers such as African Americans gain pathways to newly created jobs.

2. **Establish the AI Workforce Resilience Program**

To mitigate risks of job displacement and ensure economic mobility, the administration should launch a federal AI Workforce Resilience Program focused on training, apprenticeships, and reskilling initiatives.

- *Expand Reskilling Initiatives*: Invest in federally funded training programs that equip workers with skills relevant to AI-resistant industries, such as cybersecurity, healthcare, and energy.

- *Create Apprenticeship & Certification Opportunities*: Partner with universities, community colleges, and vocational training institutions to develop AI-focused apprenticeships and technical certification programs, ensuring impacted workers are positioned to thrive in the AI economy.
- *Incentivize Private Sector AI Workforce Development*: Provide tax incentives for corporations that implement AI hiring, upskilling, and retraining initiatives focused on expanding participation in AI-driven roles particularly for those from economically vulnerable communities.

3. Increase Investment in AI & STEM Education

To close the AI skills gap and increase Black representation in AI-driven fields, early and sustained investment in education is necessary.

- *Enhance Funding for Colleges, Universities and Vocational Schools*: Allocate federal funding for AI and STEM education programs to all colleges and universities to develop robust AI curricula, research programs, and technical training hubs.
- *Implement AI & Digital Literacy in K-12 Schools*: Introduce AI, coding, and digital literacy courses early in the education pipeline, particularly in underserved communities, to build foundational skills and expose all students to AI career paths.
- *Launch AI Research Fellowships & Scholarships*: Establish federal AI research fellowships, STEM scholarships, and funding opportunities targeted at students pursuing AI-related fields, ensuring distinct participation in the future AI workforce.

4. Promote AI Entrepreneurship

AI is reshaping industries and creating new business opportunities, but African American entrepreneurs remain severely underfunded and underrepresented in AI-driven startups. Expanding access to capital and support systems is crucial to ensuring Black innovators can participate in AI entrepreneurship.

- *Provide Access to AI Startup Capital*: Establish federal AI business grants, low-interest loans, and investment funds that includes African American entrepreneurs and AI-driven small businesses.
- *Develop AI Innovation Hubs in Lower-Income Communities*: Fund AI business incubators and accelerators focused on supporting AI startups, providing mentorship, networking, and access to cutting-edge AI technology to lower-income communities.
- *Ensure Federal AI Procurement Supports Entrepreneurs*: Mandate that a percentage of federal AI contracts and procurement opportunities be allocated to start-up AI businesses, ensuring intentional participation in government-backed AI initiatives and ensuring that underrepresented groups like African Americans are not left out of this investment.

Conclusion

As the Trump administration advances its AI agenda, it must ensure that AI innovation drives economic prosperity rather than exacerbates existing economic disparities. Policies must not only

prepare Black workers for AI-driven disruptions but also create pathways to AI-related employment and entrepreneurship. By integrating workforce resilience, STEM education, business investment, and AI accountability into the AI action plan, the U.S. can retain its global AI leadership while fostering inclusive economic growth.

These policy recommendations align AI-driven innovation with national competitiveness, ensuring that African American workers, entrepreneurs, and students have a stake in the AI economy—not just as consumers of technology but as leaders, innovators, and business owners shaping its future.

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