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March 18, 2025

Hon. Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.
Secretary
Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Kennedy,

Since 2021, Consumers' Research has educated consumers about the dangers of ESG and woke capitalism through the [Consumers First Initiative](#), a multi-million-dollar ongoing campaign calling out woke corporations for pushing an activist agenda while betraying their customers. Now, Consumers' Research is expanding our consumer initiative to include the hospitals nationwide that are prioritizing political ideologies over patients.

Recently, Consumers' Research [exposed](#) Cleveland Clinic for prioritizing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), gender ideology, and climate activism over patient well-being—all while [receiving](#) millions in federal dollars. This troubling trend is not isolated, and the organization's research has now led to additional hospitals, one of which is Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC).

VUMC, a top [research](#) hospital in the United States, relies heavily on federal dollars. So far in FY 2025, VUMC has [received](#) 87 National Institutes of Health (NIH) awards totaling more than \$66 million and in February of this year, VUMC announced that the Vanderbilt School of Medicine (VUSM), which is connected to VUMC, ranked [fifth](#) in NIH research funding. But rather than focus on core medical research, large portions of this funding appears to be directed toward politically-motivated initiatives such as DEI.

For example, VUMC secured active NIH [grant](#) funding through May 2028 tied to the NIH's Faculty Institutional Recruitment for Sustainable Transformation (FIRST) [program](#). This program aims to foster "inclusive excellence" in biomedical research by prioritizing diversity over merit. In line with this, Vanderbilt and VUMC [launched](#) a \$17 million DEI and Belonging Program, the Vanderbilt Faculty Institutional Recruitment for Sustainable Transformation Program (V-FIRST), an initiative to hire, promote, recruit, and retain diverse biomedical researchers. VUMC's efforts, bolstered by NIH grants, are specifically designed to advance DEI ideology which puts irrelevant characteristics above skill and merit.

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Combined with federal funding, VUMC has made substantive, long-term commitments to DEI by sponsoring various organizations and programs. The aforementioned [V-FIRST](#) initiative aims to increase “diversity and inclusion” through new plans, heightened accountability, and significant financial investments. Similarly, the [Meharry-Vanderbilt Alliance](#) seeks to expand clinical trial access amid “[DEI challenges](#),” framing health equity as a major goal of their health care efforts.

According to the nonprofit Do No Harm’s [report](#), “The DEI Bureaucracy in Tennessee's Medical Schools,” VUMC and the VUSM operate a robust network of DEI entities—including the Office of Health Equity, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, and the Office for Diversity Affairs—dedicated to “collectively addressing systemic inequities” and “confronting structural racism.” This network even extends to the House Staff Diversity and Inclusion Alliance (HSDIA), which trains staff to recognize and respond to “workplace microaggressions.”

Curiously, VUMC appears to be taking steps to conceal these efforts. The health system recently began scrubbing its website, moving DEI-related policies and programs behind password-protected pages and deleting other links.

What is VUMC hiding by shifting its controversial content internally and restricting public access? Is the hospital actually removing ideological agendas from its organization, or are they simply hiding them from the public? Consumers and patients deserve transparency and answers.

Given this clear misalignment with the priorities of the Trump Administration and the potential misuse of government aid, Consumers' Research urges the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), and other relevant agencies to investigate Vanderbilt University Medical Center. Taxpayer dollars should be used to prioritize patient care, not political activism. Consumers’ Research stands ready to assist as needed to ensure accountability and protect consumers.

Thank you for your attention to this pressing matter. Consumers’ Research looks forward any actions taken to hold hospitals accountable for using federal funding and taxpayer dollars to advance radical political agendas rather than high-quality patient care.

Sincerely,

Will Hild

Will Hild
Executive Director

CC: Amy Gleason, Administrator, Department of Government Efficiency

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