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## Missouri prosecutors sue Starbucks over DEI practices, claiming they raise prices and slow service




By [Aimee Picchi](#)

Edited By [Alain Sherter](#)

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What is DEI and why is it facing pushback? 



[What is DEI and why is it facing pushback? 02:42](#)

Starbucks faces a new lawsuit filed by Missouri's attorney general alleging the restaurant chain relies on "race-and-sex-based hiring practices" that violate federal and state laws. The [complaint](#) also claims the coffee chain's hiring policies have led to slower service and higher prices for consumers because it isn't recruiting the most qualified workers.

The lawsuit, filed Tuesday by Missouri Attorney General Andrew Bailey, claims Starbucks' diversity, equity and inclusion, or DEI, policies are "mere pretext for its actual commitment to unlawful discrimination."

The litigation comes just weeks after President Trump signed an executive order [banning diversity, equity and inclusion](#) programs across the U.S. government, while also directing the U.S. attorney general to "encourage the private sector to end illegal discrimination and preferences, including DEI."

A number of major retailers and [other companies](#), along with other organizations, have recently rolled back their DEI initiatives amid pushback from conservative activists, including Ford, Google, McDonald's, Meta, Target and Walmart.

In a statement to CBS News responding to Missouri's suit, Starbucks said, "We disagree with the attorney general, and these allegations are inaccurate. We are deeply committed to creating opportunity for every single one of our partners (employees). Our programs and benefits are open to everyone and lawful."

The company added, "Our hiring practices are inclusive fair and competitive and designed to ensure the strongest candidate for every job every time."

Critics of DEI say employers should make their hiring decisions based on merit alone without regard to race, color, gender and other legally protected categories. The Missouri lawsuit echoes those arguments, alleging that Starbucks' hiring practices discriminates against residents of the state.

"Starbucks' policies harm the many Missourians whom work, or would like to work, at Starbucks, but have been, are being or will be discriminated against as future victims on the basis of their race, sex, or inclusion in other protected groups," the complaint alleges.

[Google rolling back DEI efforts 04:45](#)

While Starbucks' prices and wait times have been a [focus of consumer complaints](#) in recent years, experts haven't generally blamed hiring practices for the chain's problems. Instead, analysts have pointed to inflation, which has pushed up the prices of ingredients like coffee and milk, as well as Starbucks' vast number of drink customizations, which can slow orders.

Starbucks CEO Brian Niccol has vowed to tackle some of those issues, pledging last year to simplify beverage customizations and saying customers should receive their drinks in four minutes or less.

Niccol, who was hired from Chipotle last year to revitalize the struggling coffee chain, has also said he wants to make Starbucks' locations ["inviting places to linger."](#)

As part of that goal, Starbucks [reversed its open-door policy](#) last month after almost seven years, now requiring that people make a purchase if they want to hang out in its stores or use restrooms. The company adopted those policies in 2018 after two Black men were arrested [at a Philadelphia Starbucks](#) where they had gone for a business meeting.

Negative publicity over the incident, which was caught on video and widely shared over social media, embarrassed the company and led to its now abandoned open-door policy.

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