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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **New Study Provides Benchmark for Workplace Equity in San Diego**

SAN DIEGO – Latinas, primary caregivers, men of color, veterans, and workers with disabilities or chronic health conditions are among the groups of San Diego employees most negatively impacted by lack of equity in the workplace, according to a new study by the Kim Center for Social Balance.

The findings represent the region’s first, large-scale measurement of employee perceptions related to fairness, professional development, caregiver support, sexual harassment prevention, diversity and more within San Diego workplaces. Results will be used to develop a regional action plan that can guide companies seeking to address issues of equity at work.

“Workplace equity is vital to any company’s financial success and longevity — from higher profits and employee retention, to greater productivity and innovation,” said Dr. Hei-ock (pronounced Hay-o) Kim, executive director of the San Diego-based, non-profit Kim Center. “Our findings show there is a lot more San Diego can be doing to make workers feel valued and heard.”

The Kim Center conducted the study — known as the LEAPS (Leadership in Ecosystems, Advancement, Policies, Supervisors) Assessment — in partnership with the UC San Diego Center for Research and Evaluation. Major initiative supporters include The Parker Foundation, Union Bank, County of San Diego and City of San Diego.

The study measured perceptions of 455 employees in various industries in San Diego across four metrics: Workplace ecosystem, advancement and compensation, policies and organizational support, and supervisor relationships. Respondents were also asked about the pandemic’s impact on their work ecosystem.

Results were tallied and organized into four categories: Problematic, Worrisome, Getting Close, and Doing Well. Most of the region’s findings fell within the Worrisome and Problematic zones. These included:

- Fewer than two-thirds of respondents see fair gender representation in workplace leadership.
- Only 58% of respondents see fair racial/ethnic representation in leadership.
- Nearly one-third of respondents report experiencing sexual harassment at work – by colleagues or clients/customers.

- At least one-third of respondents experience microaggressions (e.g., inappropriate comments about their appearance, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.).
- 20% of respondents feel they cannot use family benefits without harming their chances for career advancement.

“Our results show that workplace equity influences San Diego employees’ intent to stay at a company,” Kim said. “It’s important for employers to know that factors like unfair advancement opportunities and lack of flexibility in balancing caregiving duties may have their workers looking elsewhere.”

On January 26 at the San Diego College of Continuing Education, the Kim Center will convene San Diego business leaders in the first of five workshops. During these workshops, key stakeholder representatives will co-design a “LEAPS Playbook” outlining collaborative strategies for achieving greater workplace equity as a united community. Together, these tools will position San Diego County to be the first region in the United States to generate measurable workplace equity progress across industries, sectors and time.

“San Diego deserves to embrace this powerful opportunity to demonstrate to the nation what measurable progress looks like for the first time in history,” Kim said. “Our region’s findings should fuel our determination to attract and retain the best talent, and create unprecedented economic and social prosperity for our community.”

*Business, legislative, and other community leaders interested in participating in the LEAPS Playbook Stakeholder Workshops can email Kim Center Executive Director Hei-ock Kim at [heiock@kimcenter.org](mailto:heiock@kimcenter.org).*

## **ABOUT THE KIM CENTER**

The Kim Center is transforming San Diego into a trailblazing model of economic and social leadership that can be replicated in other regions throughout the nation. Collaborative local action informed by local data is essential to cultural transformation, so we unite stakeholders representatives around our LEAPS initiative. LEAPS accelerates change through a rigorous Assessment, custom Playbook, and national Accreditation. Learn more at [kimcenter.org](http://kimcenter.org).

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- LEAD San Diego
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