

Dear CalHR,

My name is Kelsey Cody and I am an Environmental Scientist in Range C at the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board. I am 34 years old and have been working in state service since Fall of 2018. Prior to that I was in graduate school, making ends meet by teaching, grading, and tutoring and with small research grants. I successfully defended my doctoral dissertation after entering state service and graduated with a net worth of almost exactly zero.

I have struggled since then to support my family in the San Francisco Bay Area, which has one of the highest costs of living in the state, country, and world. I live here because it is where my friends and family live, and as I have learned throughout my life, friends and family are the only meaningful safety net in the United States. To save money, my wife and I rent half a duplex from my mother at below market rates, own only one car (that's 14 years old), buy nearly everything we own second-hand, and have delayed having children. My wife and I are part of the downwardly mobile Millennial generation, and while we know that the financial peace of mind and security enjoyed by our parents is out of reach for us, we are working incredibly hard to raise our children in a home that provides the basic conditions and comforts that should be available in a developed country for two people with PhD's in science.

Although state service generally provides good income stability, job security, benefits, and promotion potential, the salary of Environmental Scientists is nearly untenable. Because of this, I have never stopped looking for other jobs. I have never fully committed myself to my workplace and coworkers. I will always have one foot out the door until I am paid what I am worth. Indeed, I am also currently an adjunct instructor at the local junior college and a paid consultant on a USDA research grant with a former professor of mine. Either of these lines of work could become my new full-time career, and very well may, if the opportunity arises. My budget since entering state service reveals that these two "side-gigs" are the only reason I have any appreciable savings. Without these jobs, I would have less than \$5,000 in liquidity to cover emergencies after working for two years as an Environmental Scientist in Range C. This fact, that I have been only able to save a little over \$200 per month from my state paycheck, is not an indictment of my ability to budget, but is instead an indictment of the state's ability to invest in its future.

At this rate, after 35 years of state service, I will have saved just \$84,000, not counting any increases in expenses due to a growing family. This is unacceptable. The state is voluntarily, as a matter of policy, proletarianizing professional scientists. In doing so, the state is undermining its own economic competitiveness, public health, ecological integrity, and fiscal viability. It is eating its seed corn. This is already causing brain drain, high turnover, low productivity, and frustrated, resentful, and unmotivated employees.

There are relatively simple ways to reverse this policy of impoverishment. I offer three compatible and complimentary policy changes: 1) End the pay differential between Environmental Scientists and other classifications that perform identical work, 2) Pay Environmental Scientists more when they work in high cost of living areas, 3) Compensate

Environmental Scientists for having advanced degrees. Each of these solutions is reasonable, ethical, and fiscally responsible.

First, if someone does the same job as someone else, they should be on the same salary scale. "Equal pay for equal work" is a well established precedent. Pay disparities of this magnitude only foment expensive unrest. Second, the state has many different public programs and pay scales to counteract the added financial burden of working in a high cost of living area. This is sensible for a number of reasons, but one of the most obvious reasons is that these areas tend to be the most populated and therefore the most competitive labor markets, leading to the need to pay more to recruit talented individuals. Finally, if someone has an advanced degree, their time is more valuable to the state and the state should pay for it. If the state believes that education increases the value of someone's time, which the state affirms in countless other ways, then the state should pay more educated employees more money whether or not the position requires an advanced degree. Not doing so only encourages more educated employees to leave or reduce their work effort. Conversely, doing so would encourage current state employees to seek additional education, increasing the value of the existing workforce to the state. In sum, these three policy changes can be best summarized as bringing Environmental Scientist pay in line with existing state policies in other realms. At present, the pay of Environmental Scientists is radically hypocritical and at odds with the state's own policies and other MOUs.

For the sake of my family, the thousands like it, and for your own sake, enact the above solutions. Otherwise, it will only be a matter of time before the state is paying private consultants multiples of what it would pay its own scientists for the same work. We won't just sit here and take it. As mission-driven and pension-motivated as we are, we can only take so much abuse. Eventually, we will leave, and you'll be left with whatever we leave behind.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kelsey C. Cody". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Kelsey C. Cody, Ph.D.
Environmental Scientist
North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board