

March 9, 2021

Ms. Eraina Ortega
Director, California Department of Human Resources
1515 S Street, North Building, Suite 500
Sacramento, California 95811-7258

Dear Director Ortega,

I am an Environmental Scientist with the State of California at the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC). I have held this position since October 2016, when I first accepted a position with the Site Mitigation and Restoration Program at DTSC's Berkeley office. I have a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Studies from the University of California at Santa Barbara and a Master of Science in Environmental Sciences from California State University, Chico. When I joined DTSC, I brought approximately seven years of experience in private environmental consulting and two years of experience as an Environmental Specialist with the County of Sacramento Environmental Management Department. My time at DTSC has mostly been a rewarding experience that has given me the opportunity to develop skillsets, work on interesting and challenging projects, and engage with incredibly talented people from a variety of backgrounds. Although my experience with DTSC has largely been positive, it has been shaded by an ongoing issue that needs your immediate attention. I am of course referring to the pay deficit to which state Environmental Scientists (Scientists) have been subjected since 2004. This arbitrary pay disparity has multiple negative impacts on Scientists, DTSC and the California Environmental Protection Agency, and the State of California as a whole.

While California has long been considered a highly desirable state in which to work and live, the cost of living significantly exceeds that of the national average. Scientists' salaries are inadequate to meet these costs in many parts of the state. During my two-year tenure at DTSC's Berkeley office, I commuted daily from Sacramento. I initially intended to move to the San Francisco Bay Area to be closer to the office, but I quickly learned that even my most modest financial goals were unattainable if I was to face the cost of living within the Bay Area. I determined that the most favorable option would be to continue living in Sacramento and to commit significant time to the daily commute. This approach required a total of nearly six hours of time spent commuting from Sacramento to Berkeley and back every single day. In addition to the amount of time dedicated to commuting, monthly commuting costs were nearly \$700.

The majority of my Scientist colleagues at DTSC's Berkeley office chose to reside in the Bay Area. Due to the disparity in pay, they are unable to attain the same quality of life

experienced by the Geologists and Engineers with whom they work daily performing the same tasks. It is unfortunate that Scientists working to protect and restore the environment of one of California's most desirable areas are not afforded the resources by their employer to have an adequate quality of life living within it.

Another issue created by the unresolved pay disparity is the unfavorable perception of Scientists by our coworkers. By treating Scientists as lesser than Geologists and Engineers, the California Department of Human Resources (CalHR) is suggesting to colleagues in our respective departments that scientists are in fact inferior and contribute significantly less than Engineers and Geologists. The idea that Scientists are somehow not as productive or skilled, created by unequal treatment from CalHR, can create a work environment in which we are seen as not deserving of the same respect afforded to Geologists and Engineers. This can lead to highly qualified Scientists being passed up for opportunities to work on more interesting or challenging projects that may lead to greater experience and career advancement. If this is a situation that CalHR does not want to perpetuate, why not demonstrate through action, and not just empty words, the same level of respect and appreciation for the two other classifications working side-by-side performing the same or very similar duties?

The State of California has long been considered a leader in protecting its natural environment. It is a destination for the entire world with its natural beauty and diverse climates and ecosystems. As Scientists, we have devoted our educations and careers to protecting these critical resources. Letting a long-standing pay inequity continue is not just an affront to Scientists, but an affront to all of those who utilize and value California's precious natural resources. It is not only natural resources that are of concern, it is the health and well-being of citizens throughout the State that rely on the work that Scientists do to keep them safe. Governor Gavin Newsom has pledged to protect California's citizens and natural resources and for it to be a leader in changing the course of climate change. Devaluing California's Environmental Scientists sends a clear message that contradicts the Governor's environmental priorities and stance on fairness and equity. Would he approve of this message?

I have had great satisfaction working as an Environmental Scientist for DTSC. I believe in DTSC's mission and the quality of work performed by myself and colleagues. The biggest negative that I have experienced is the pay disparity that exists between Scientists, and the Geologists and Engineers who we work with daily, performing equal duties. The constant knowledge that our employer sees us as not deserving of like pay for like work crushes the morale of myself and other Scientists. Year after year Scientists get the message from their employer that they do not deserve to be treated with equal respect nor appreciated for their contributions. This situation should never be allowed by a State that prides itself in environmental leadership. It's simply illogical and goes against all of the best workplace practices and norms that seek to create a productive and sustainable work environment. The State of California, that prides itself

on fighting for equality, fairness, and decency, cannot continue to ignore this deplorable issue that has been called out by so many voices for so many years. CalHR needs to resolve this shameful issue before it become even more widely known and for California to be seen as the State that discriminates against its own Scientists.

After approximately four and half years with DTSC, I need to ask you: why are Scientists treated differently than Geologists and Engineers? Does CalHR see us as inferior to our colleagues who make significantly more than Scientists for performing the same work? The treatment that we have received indicates that CalHR does not see us as valuable to the State of California. These are not being asked rhetorically and we need to know the answers.

This problem has been allowed to continue for far too long. CalHR can no longer placate us by saying that the budget will not allow us pay parity, that it is being considered, or dribble modest increases that never close the pay gap. CalHR needs to address this pay disparity immediately. If CalHR has determined that we are not deserving of the same salary afforded our colleagues, then CalHR needs to provide us with a clear explanation of why.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gavin McCreary". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

Gavin McCreary, M.S.
Environmental Scientist
Department of Toxic Substances Control
Site Mitigation and Restoration Program
Sacramento Regional Office