

From:

Date: Thu, Apr 1, 2021 at 5:58 PM

Subject: Please End State Scientists Pay Inequity

To: <Eraina.Ortega@calhr.ca.gov>

Cc: <SectyBlumenfeld@calepa.ca.gov>

Dear Director Ortega,

When I wake in the morning I am, first and foremost, thankful I am employed. Luckily, with COVID safety measures in place, I can continue my work of behalf of the people of the State of California. As a Senior Environmental Scientist in the Department of Toxic Substances Control's Site Mitigation and Restoration Program (SMRP) I am working to protect the public and the environment. I work side-by-side with Hazardous Substances Engineers and Engineering Geologists on environmental cleanup projects throughout the State, conducting the same work. We have the same job training, report to the same supervisors, and have essentially identical duties. We consider each other peers. However, 16 years ago in 2005, our once long-standing salary equity relationship changed when engineers began being compensated at a much higher rate for doing the same job as scientists (approximately 44%). I ask the same question asked by my co-worker, *"Why can the State afford to pay an engineer, but not a scientist for doing the same job?"* Why the bias?

Yet, on top of this inequity, another inequity occurs. The State of California diligently maintains the required vertical and horizontal pay relationships between supervisors and staff for nearly all classifications in state service, including staff level engineers and supervising engineers in Bargaining Unit 9, but refuses to maintain those same pay relationships for state scientists in Bargaining Unit 10. This also has the appearance of bias, or one might even call it discrimination. How can the State justify treating two professional units so differently for 16 years, especially when at DTSC they work side-by-side on the same types of projects doing the same work?

As a project manager and Senior Environmental Scientist involved in the cleanup of a high-profile federal facility, state and federal politicians have urged the regulatory agencies involved in this cleanup (DTSC, Regional Water Quality Control Board, USEPA) to continue this work, be protective and mindful of the community, while at the same time move the project towards completion as quickly as possible so that needed housing and redevelopment can occur.

These same politicians who have been fighting for federal funding for the people of this great state amidst the COVID 19 pandemic, recognize the need of the people, yet at the same time seem to have blinders on to the pay inequity that has been plaguing the scientist state worker for 16 years. We are a small group in relation to the many state workers, a minority. Appearance and public perception of the State is of the utmost importance in high profile cleanup projects, all public projects really. Appearance is everything. Yet it appears as if scientists are not held in as high of esteem as other state workers, perhaps even biased against, by our own state leaders.

Scientists have been told that fixing the pay issue requires expending money that the State cannot afford to spend. I no longer believe or accept this excuse. Especially, now that the proposed draft budget is the largest in California's history and includes new spending on statewide programs. New spending without taking care of State scientists? This is not right.

With unexpected surplus revenues, which have now exceeded projections and have allowed reserve accounts to be replenished, Governor Newsom has proposed spending 4.1 billion dollars on a suite of initiatives such as addressing climate change, preventing wildfires, reducing smog, and supporting the adoption of electric vehicles in the January draft budget for 2021-2022. These are all important initiatives, and State scientists should be considered just as important considering each one of these initiatives is going to involve State scientists in some capacity. The Governor just this March indicated that he was going to *"work with them (unions/state workers) in a collaborative spirit, great respect and admiration"* on restoring workers' pay (Sacramento Bee, March 1, 2021).

It is not enough to restore our previous pay cuts and provide the 5% raise not previously provided under our MOU. This 16 year pay inequity, this bias, must and can be addressed now. With this surplus funding, this is the time to correct this 16 year injustice. Please see me not just as a union member but as an individual and a scientist who has worked diligently for 20 years for the people of California, a State worker who deserves the respect that the Governor spoke of.

Sincerely,

Juanita Bacey
Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist)
Department of Toxic Substances Control
Site Mitigation and Restoration Program

cc: via email

Gavin Newsom
California Governor

Jared Blumenfeld
California Secretary for Environmental Protection

Jennifer Siebel Newsom
First Partner of California Governor and
#EqualPayCA Partner