

Dear Director Ortega,

With an increasing awareness and understanding of the detrimental effects implicit bias has in the workplace, we, the diverse collective of minority state scientists, are calling on you to acknowledge the state's own implicit bias and to ensure it is not a factor during the current Unit 10 contract negotiations.

In its simplest form, "implicit bias" **is the process of associating stereotypes or attitudes towards categories of people without conscious awareness.** *In our case, it is CalHR's unconscious choice and policy to stereotype scientists – in particular scientists like us – as less valued. We have arrived at this opinion because we can find no other reason why our own employer would treat the same group of employees so differently for so many years.*

As you are undoubtedly aware, inequitable pay is negatively impacting all of California's scientific and human health programs and the nearly 40 million people that depend on them. Especially those of us that are women and people of color who are working side-by-side with our engineering counterparts performing the same duties. However, state scientists do not receive the same compensation, and in many cases we are paid up to 30% less than our colleagues for doing the same job. As a result, we have become victims of this implicit bias and the unfair, negative treatment it causes.

The National Equity Project explains that Implicit bias and its effects play out through three keys processes: Priming, Associations, and Assumptions. Priming is a psychological phenomena in which a word, image, sound, or any other stimulus is used to elicit an associated response. The Associations about groups of people are created and reinforced through priming. With that basic understanding in mind, it would appear that in the case of state scientists, CalHR's implicit bias for Union 10 scientists functions as follows: engineers à many males and Caucasians à higher salaries. And in the case of scientists à many females and people of color à lower salaries.

We do not understand how this bias developed, but given our lived experience for more than a decade, we can assure you that it is real and causing grave issues throughout our ranks. And as it continues, we are still told to just accept this disproportionate and unjustified pay structure because we are a large minority-based classification that doesn't deserve to be treated equitably. To put it simply, we are told to just accept it, because that is just the way it is ...that is what real bias and oppression looks like and we are calling it out now.

Further evidence for implicit bias can be found in the actions of CalHR through the last decade. For the favored engineering unit, appropriate salary adjustments have been provided so the state can compete for the workers it needs. Approximately 6 years ago, Unit 10 supervisors' and managers' salaries were likewise adjusted after a court case determined that scientists and engineers do the same or similar work and must be compensated accordingly. Unfortunately, and in violation of the state's own laws and policies, the state chose not to extend those same compensation adjustments to rank-

and-file scientists. This is yet another, clear example of implicit bias and until it's recognized and eliminated, we, the minority state scientists in Unit 10, will continue to suffer its effects.

California is an economic powerhouse more than capable of providing fair and equitable pay; we can discern no valid reason for continuing this bias against state scientists that affects so many minorities. For decades, California has prided itself on progressive values and professed equity for all its citizens, yet it has failed to live up to those proclamations for many, including its own employees. Governor Newsom himself has repeatedly expressed his beliefs concerning fair pay and has been very clear about his desire to ensure equitable treatment of *all* Californians. Nonetheless, the minority scientific staff that are committed to protecting California's public health and environment, have been repeatedly denied this right.

As a reminder of the Governor's commitment to equity and fair pay, here are a few quotes from his State of the State address that was delivered on March 26th of this year.

- *Our journey back must be a path to close **inequities**. There is no economic recovery without economic justice.*
- *California's most acute preexisting condition remains income **inequality**.*
- *So, as we respond to this pandemic, we need to stay fixated on closing **unacceptable disparities**.*

With the Governor's words in mind, we find it unconscionable that the state can both profess to be a progressive and upstanding employer and at the same time continue to ignore its egregious and inequitable treatment of its own employees. Moreover, we find it reprehensible that the state knowingly recruits new scientists into such an egregious and discriminatory pay situation without any consideration for how it affects those new employees, or the programs they will support. If the state willingly continues to maintain the status quo, we can only conclude that the state is not only accepting of its own bias, but that it's okay with actively *promoting* it.

Implicit bias has always existed and has been written about for hundreds of years. Even Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the famous German writer and scientist who lived in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, recognized and studied it. He wrote extensively about how humans treat one another and one of his observations perfectly captures what is happening today with California state scientists. He wrote, ***"the way you see people is the way you treat them, and the way you treat them is what they become"***. This observation accurately represents how many of us minority scientists feel about the way our employer sees us. That we are inferior and not worthy of respect nor of being treated as equals. And just as Goethe suggested, many of us are responding by becoming resentful, uncommitted, and searching constantly for employment opportunities where we can gain the respect and equitable treatment shown to our colleagues.

While we certainly don't want to believe it's true, we are scientists and therefore must rely on the evidence presented. Therefore, we ask: do you see us as less valuable to the state when compared to our supervisors and managers, or engineer colleagues? Are rank-and-file state scientists in some way inferior to these other groups that have been consistently treated with appreciation and respect over the years? Would the Governor support a decision to continue this implicit bias against state scientists?

We believe Governor Newsom would be appalled by our situation if it were known to him, and that he would provide instruction to rectify it immediately. However, as he is evidently not aware and we continue to hear there is no intention to fix it, we can only conclude that you and other leaders he has entrusted to carry out his vision are not in agreement with his values and priorities, or willing to support his vision for equity and fair pay.

During his State of the State Address on March 26th, Governor Newsom also said ...*This is our moment – to create the California we all want to live in, to extend the dream of prosperity, equity, and progress to ALL.*

Will you ignore his words and turn them into empty promises? Or will you see them as instructions to carry out his vision to create a fair and unbiased workplace for ALL Californians, including state scientists?

We want to believe that you also desire a bias-free workplace and are truly committed to carrying out the Governor's vision, but it's only your actions that matter, so please be aware that the decision you make about state scientist's compensation will be *our* answer.

Sincerely, the represented minority Unit 10 State Scientists

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