

To: George Alexeeff, George.Alexeeff@oehha.ca.gov
Director, Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment
Re: Competitive Salaries for OEHHA Scientists
Date: April-May 2015
CC: Cal EPA Secretary Matthew Rodriquez; Matthew.Rodriquez@calepa.ca.gov
CalHR Director Richard Gillihan; Richard.Gillihan@dof.ca.gov
Governor Jerry Brown; Governor's Office, 1st Floor, State Capitol, CA 95814

The undersigned OEHHA Scientists remain dedicated to protecting the public and environmental health of California. We apply our advanced education and skills to develop highly-respected work products, which advance the state of science. Work by OEHHA scientists fulfill OEHHA's statutory mandates and execute its important programs, including the nationally recognized CalEnviroScreen, Air Toxics Hot Spots, Prop 65, fish advisories, pesticide illness reporting and investigation, and Public Health Goal (water standards) programs, to name just a few. Our scientific efforts identify toxic hazards, such as chromium VI, phthalates, PBDEs, environmental tobacco smoke, and diesel exhaust, characterize their risks, and provide the requisite information for their control and regulation. OEHHA scientists are pioneering leaders on issues such as climate change, health effects of traffic-related air pollution, and green chemistry. In return, the State of CA has an obligation to compensate its respected scientists fairly for their efforts, and to attract and retain highly qualified scientists. Unfortunately, the State is failing on these counts.

The State of CA no longer pays competitive salaries for OEHHA Scientists or the vast majority of state scientists. The CalHR2013 California State Employee Total Compensation Report finds that the gap between salaries of state scientists and other government scientists is as great as 40%. Low salaries prevent OEHHA from attracting competitive talent and result in poor staff morale, which in turn affects retention and work performance. Loss of wages, due to years of furloughs and insufficient cost of living and salary increases, has resulted in an unacceptable loss of purchasing power. Our salaries have less purchasing power than 10 years ago, made even more egregious since OEHHA's two office locations, Oakland and Sacramento, are urban areas with high costs of living. The CalHR Report finds that the Federal Government recognizes the higher cost of living in urban areas, and reflects that in its pay scales. But the state of California does not. It has simply become untenable to work as a scientist for the State of California when compared with other public and private sector employers.

PLEASE do your part to help remedy the situation. Urge Governor Brown and his Cal HR to implement the Research Scientist series reclassification changes currently under consideration, and assign a competitive salary range for this series. We respectfully request that OEHHA leadership convey to CalEPA management, CalHR, and Governor Brown the need for State scientist salaries to be commensurate with scientific positions in federal, county, and city governmental agencies.

Signed and Submitted by 28 State Scientists

FROM: OEHHA Oakland Office