

Dear Director Ortega,

I have worked for the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) for the last 31 years, an agency that has been struggling with staff turnover and funding issues for decades. Since the late 1990's two things have happened: 1) the wages paid to Unit 10 scientists have fallen behind that of other employers (private, local and federal); and 2) a large pay disparity evolved between the engineers' union and the scientists' union for doing the same project management work. Both have contributed to a high-level of employee turnover which means more time and money being spent on hiring, training, and re-hiring Environmental Scientists. All of which results in a continual loss of institutional knowledge. Project work delays are another major outcome of constant employee turnover. All of these issues are directly related to the large pay disparity caused by the contracts and policies for environmental scientists' pay.

For a current example, my unit just lost yet another ES staff member to a local non-profit that works with Environmental Justice communities, simply because they are paying her more than DTSC. She has a biology degree and was working on her master's degree related to environmental justice. We need this type of talent to succeed.

Below is a copy of the Governor's recent press release dated July 14, 2021. There has been a multi-year internal, legislative, and external stakeholder effort to help address DTSC's needs and revenue shortcomings to meet all the ever increasing legislative and on-going mandated work assigned to the department. The Governor thought it was vital to showcase the effort and needs of our department, as our mission is to protect public health.

The total amount provided for the cleanup of contaminated sites impacting California's people and resources amounts to \$937,000,000, almost a billion dollar to fix deferred issues. Only \$104,000,000 is for existing operations with long deferred needs as pointed out by the Governor. Our agency has been saddled with unfunded and underfunded legislative requirements ever since I started in 1990.

This statement from the press release stood out: "In the California Comeback, no one is being left behind. We're making transformative investments to ensure that our overburdened communities, which were also disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, will finally have an equitable opportunity to thrive in a healthy environment,"

Does the "California Comeback" where "no one is being left behind" include Unit 10 scientists? The ones responsible for doing the work these additional monies will require. Funding alone will not rectify DTSC's issues or result in better outcomes for overburdened communities. Without a stable, motivated, and experienced pool of state scientists, DTSC's chances of correcting the problems of the past will be severely limited.

DTSC's has many problems that have finally been recognized by the Governor and legislature. Isn't it time for you to recognize how under-paying state scientists has also contributed to DTSC's problems over the years? Problems that could have been avoided if the appropriate salary relationships were maintained. Surely you believe the Governor and legislature would support the implementation of your own policy on Internal Pay relationships? Policies that if implemented would very likely result in a more talented, stable, and motivated workforce that would help ensure DTSC's success.

What can possibly be holding you back from resolving one of the biggest issues affecting DTSC and that you have the sole responsibility of addressing?

Sincerely,

Matthew McCarron

Sr. Environmental Scientist

Department of Toxic Substances Control

Attachment: Governor's press release July 14, 2021

<https://www.gov.ca.gov/2021/07/14/governor-newsom-highlights-dtsc-reform-legislation-to-protect-the-health-of-vulnerable-communities/>

Full Text with Highlights below:

## Governor Newsom Highlights DTSC Reform Legislation to Protect the Health of Vulnerable Communities

Published: Jul 14, 2021

BELL GARDENS – Governor Gavin Newsom today visited Bell Gardens, a pollution hotspot in Los Angeles County, to **highlight comprehensive toxics governance, policy and fee reform legislation** that paves the way to safer, healthier communities through increased transparency and accountability at the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC). The legislation also ensures the funds required to investigate and start the process of environmental remediation for the state's contaminated sites.

“In the California Comeback, no one is being left behind. We’re making transformative investments to ensure that our overburdened communities, which were also disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, will finally have an equitable opportunity to thrive in a healthy environment,” said Governor Newsom, who today met with impacted members of the community. “This comprehensive legislation gives DTSC the tools and sustainable funding it needs to make our communities cleaner and safer and boosts transparency and accountability to the public. I want to thank Assemblymember Cristina Garcia for championing this effort as well as the dedication of Speaker Rendon and Pro Tem Atkins, Assemblymembers Quirk, Santiago and Carrillo, Senators Durazo, Gonzalez and Wieckowski and countless stakeholders for their leadership and collaboration to bring this reform to fruition.”

Signed as part of the state budget Monday, SB 158 restructures and increases fees related to the handling of hazardous substances and hazardous waste, which is expected to add approximately \$104 million annually in revenue for DTSC beginning in 2022-23. The additional funding will enable DTSC to deliver on its statutory responsibilities and workload, which has increased significantly over the decades.

Increasing transparency and oversight of the Department and its work, the legislation creates a new Board of Environmental Safety within DTSC, and establishes an Ombudsperson to receive complaints and suggestions, offer assistance to the public and make recommendations to the Department.

“These are generational investments towards creating a toxic free future in California,” said CalEPA Secretary Jared Blumenfeld. “This reform will empower the Department of Toxic Substances Control with the funds needed to develop a comprehensive plan for managing and enforcing against all hazardous waste generated in the state, while also seeking out less toxic alternatives so that we can continue to lead and innovate in environmental protection the way Californians deserve.”

The legislation also invests \$500 million to accelerate the cleanup of contaminated properties and perform investigations throughout the state and \$322.4 million for the cleanup of additional properties near the former Exide facility in Vernon. To date, the state has provided over \$251 million for residential cleanup and other costs associated with the Exide facility.

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