

May 19, 2022

Eraina Ortega
Director, California Department of Human Resources

Dear Ms. Ortega:

I am writing to add my voice to achieving fairness in the workplace for state scientists. As you know, state scientists do a huge variety of jobs critical to protecting California's resources, and improving the health and safety of our population. Without the state scientists, the great things that make this state so attractive (such as clean water, healthy forests, or safe consumer products) would eventually disappear, and along with those things, the economic health of the state. State scientists are one of the best investments that California can make to protecting our collective future.

And yet, those state scientists are woefully underpaid, especially for the value they create for all of us. Here's what they need to be fair. They need at least pay parity with the state engineers, whose role is also important, but no more so than the scientists. In fact, the engineers are often hired to do the exact same job, the same tasks, requiring the same skills, in the same work environment. The only difference is that the state engineers are paid on average 27% more than the scientists. That is not only unfair, it is a morale killer for the scientists, who love what they do, but often can't justify staying in their jobs as the cost of living continues to rise everywhere in the state. The net effect of this inequity is that California will continue to lose its best scientists. We can't afford that. The real losers in all this are the citizens of California, who depend on those scientists every day.

Do the right thing. Be fair. Pay them what they deserve. Frankly, it's what they have earned. Pay equity with the engineers. Not too much to ask. And now is the time.

respectfully,
John Rickenbach

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