

Ms. Eraina Ortega
 Director, California Department of Human Resources
 1515 S Street, North Building, Suite 500
 Sacramento, California 95811-7258

Dear Ms. Ortega,

I am an Environmental Scientist (Scientist) at The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) and am writing to address the pay inequity issues faced by State Scientists. I have held my position since March of 2020, and I just moved into Range B after completing my first year in Range A. Prior to that, I worked at the California Air Resources Board as an Air Resources Technician and began working there in January of 2018. Cumulatively, I have a little over three years with the state, serving the public by working on climate change mitigation measures and protecting water quality.

I am a single parent to an amazing eight year old, trying to survive on one income that is **not a livable wage** in California; we are a state with an extremely high cost of living, and our housing and rental market makes surviving difficult for two income households, let alone a one income home. I am sure this situation is not unique to me. It is becoming so difficult that **I am currently seeking options for a second job outside my normal work hours** to better support my child. Adding a second job to my schedule will be very hard on my son and I, but what other options do I have if the state will not recognize and remedy the pay inequity for its Scientists? I feel strongly about the importance of the work being done by the SWRCB and CalEPA, and I do not want to leave my job if I can avoid it, which leaves me with having to consider a second job.

I would also like to point out that I am not living beyond my means. I am a frugal person and try to stretch every cent to the best of my ability; however, even penny pinching, the Scientist salary is not a livable wage. My office is in downtown Sacramento, but I could not afford to live there on my salary and I currently live an hour from the city. Prior to the pandemic, this added two hours, sometimes three depending on traffic, to my workday due to the commute. Even in my county, housing and rental costs are skyrocketing in an area that used to be the low-cost place to live if you worked in Sacramento. The rent for my modest, aging apartment has gone up 16% since I first moved in three years ago, and home costs are well beyond my means. I can't save for a down payment for a home, for an emergency fund, or college for my son because I live paycheck to paycheck. **Why is it that Scientists, who do the same work as the Engineers and Geologists we work with, are not afforded the same quality of life for themselves and their families that our colleagues receive?** Why is it that the work we do to protect public health and the environment for all Californians does not provide us ample compensation to support our own families?

Furthermore, scientists working for the Federal Government and for counties across California earn significantly higher salaries than those working for the State. For example, the introductory salary for a Sacramento County Environmental Specialist Level I is 37.8% more a month than a State Scientist entering Range A. Please see Table 1 for more information on the pay inequality.

Table 1: pay ranges for an Environmental Scientist with the State of California, versus an Environmental Specialist with Sacramento County; both positions conduct like work and require the same qualifications.

State ES		Sacramento County ES		% difference in Minimum	% Difference in Maximum
Range A	\$3851 - \$4768	Level I	\$5307 (no range)	37.8%	11.3%
Range B	\$4680 - \$5807	Level II	\$5712 - \$6942	22.1%	19.5%
Range C	\$5923 - \$7364	Level III	\$7118 - \$8654	20.2%	17.5%

In addition, California's Air Resources Board (CARB) pays their scientists like engineers through the Air Pollution Specialist classification. CARB is easily able to attract and retain talent because of the fair and equitable compensation, and some State Scientists leave their positions for Air Pollution Specialist classifications because of this. While the state might not be losing these staff entirely, they are losing skilled scientists in positions that are critical for the other types of environmental work being done outside CARB.

We are in the midst of a climate crisis. We are seeing extreme weather events, increases in the intensity and frequency of wildfire events and drought, and many other impacts, and skilled Scientists are needed across state agencies now more than ever; yet the state will increasingly see retention and recruitment problems if the pay inequity issues faced by Scientists is not addressed.

I want to close by saying that I sincerely love my work at the SWRCB, and my interactions with staff across the SWRCB and CalEPA as whole have been overwhelmingly positive. I am grateful for all the support and opportunities I have been afforded here, and for the incredibly passionate and talented people I get to work with every day. I believe strongly in the mission of both the SWRCB and CalEPA, and it is my dream fulfilled to work in the CalEPA sphere. I wanted to make a difference, and to do work that will provide a healthier planet for my son and the generations to come. All I ask is that CalHR and the Newsom Administration address the pay inequity for State Scientists, so that we may have the same quality of life for ourselves and our families that our colleagues enjoy, while we continue our work to protect public health and the environment for all Californians. I will be monitoring the bargaining closely and look forward to hearing from you on this matter.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]