

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 26, 2022

The Honorable Michael S. Regan
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Regan:

We write to support EPA employees in reaching a final agreement during collective bargaining with the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) Council 238. At a time when EPA is administering historic levels of funding, it is imperative that EPA's career employees are supported by the agency's political leadership. Improving the rights and protections of EPA employees is critical to recruit and retain the talented and diverse workforce needed to fulfill the agency's mission to address climate change, enhance environmental justice, and protect public health and the environment.

We know that you, as a former EPA employee, and this Administration take seriously the need to support career staff at EPA. We appreciate the work that has been done to rebuild and restaff the Agency and to protect scientists and experts, enabling them to better fulfill their duties.

We believe that AFGE's proposal to invest in EPA's workforce is a cost-effective solution that will help employees perform the mission of the agency. According to AFGE, these investments — such as restoring career ladders, supporting sound science, and increased diversity— come at a minimal cost. However, we have been told that the investments will pay out enormous dividends in attracting and retaining the best and the brightest to fill the ranks of EPA's highly educated, highly trained workforce.

We believe EPA employees should be paid a wage that is consistent with the level of work they complete. For example, according to several of our constituents who are currently EPA employees, they are stagnating at the GS-12 level, while completing the work of a GS-13. The practice of keeping employees at a GS-12, with pay and benefits of a GS-12, will only risk draining the EPA's workforce as employees seek better opportunities with room for growth in the private sector. In general, public sector employees should be fairly compensated for their work and provided with opportunities to advance their careers.

From our perspective, EPA will benefit from employing hiring practices that ensure a diverse and healthy workforce and work environment, including the use of blind hiring practices while conducting job searches. Using a blind hiring practice will prevent implicit bias from creeping into hiring decisions, while ensuring a workforce that is diverse in backgrounds and ideas.

Similarly for EPA's existing workforce, as the Biden Administration has pledged to support diversity, equity, and inclusion, we believe it is important EPA takes all measures necessary to ensure that any reported cases of discrimination are handled quickly, properly, and respectfully. In doing so, the EPA will create a more inclusive environment for its staff. We know advancing

diversity, equity, and inclusion is important to the Agency and that you have taken strides on this front, including through the creation of an Agency-wide action plan, mandatory training on unconscious bias in the hiring process for all supervisors, and providing recommendations to include diversity, equity, and inclusion considerations in senior leadership performance agreements. We hope EPA will build upon these efforts and work with EPA employees to go further.

In the past year, EPA has been given new and significant authorities and historic funding to address many of the nation's most pressing environmental and environmental justice challenges. We believe the successful implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act will require a well-trained, diverse, dedicated, and robust EPA workforce.

We hope you will give AFGE's proposal full and fair consideration consistent with applicable law, rules, and regulations in order to enable EPA to recruit, retain, and protect the workforce needed now and into the future.

Sincerely,



Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



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Member of Congress
Chair, Committee on Energy
and Commerce




Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Chellie Pingree
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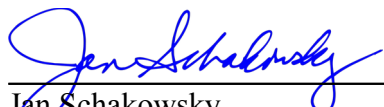
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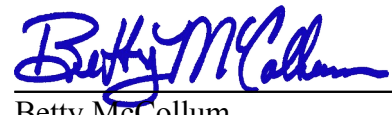
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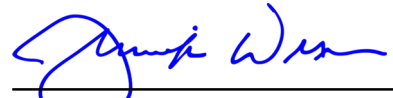
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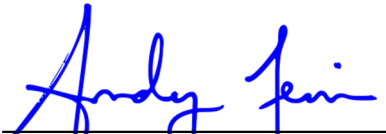
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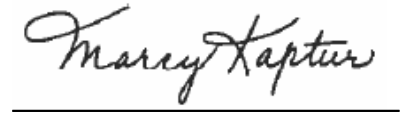



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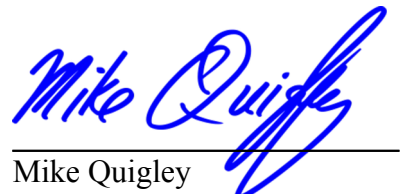

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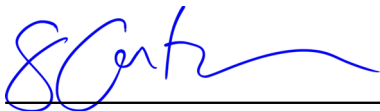
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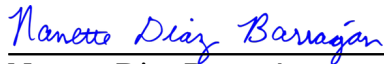
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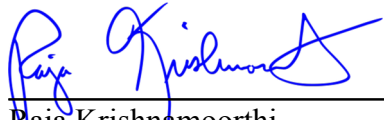
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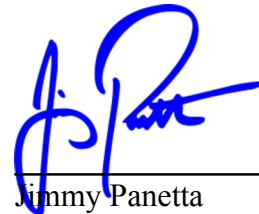
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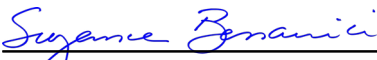
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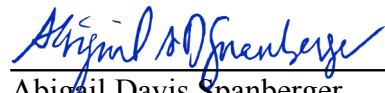


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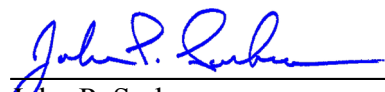
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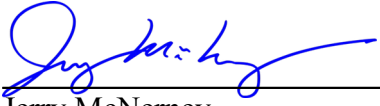
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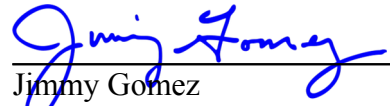
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