

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC

March 27, 2025

The Honorable Lee Zeldin
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20004

RE: Opposition to Proposed Dismantling of EPA's Office of Research and Development

Dear Administrator Zeldin:

We write to express our deep concern and opposition to plans by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to cut offices, programs, and employees. A White House spokesperson recently stated the EPA plans to reduce Agency funding by 65 percent,¹ with entire divisions being subject to possible closure.

We are particularly concerned by the proposal to eliminate up to 75 percent of employees within EPA's Office of Research and Development (ORD).² Firing nearly 1,200 dedicated ORD public servants³ across the country would decimate the scientific backbone of EPA which provides independent, objective, and unparalleled research that informs Agency assessments and decision-making.

ORD technical employees are organized into four centers with support from three offices: the Center for Computational Toxicology and Exposure; the Center for Environmental Measurement and Modeling; the Center for Environmental Solutions and Emergency Response; the Center for Public Health and Environmental Assessment; the Office of Resource Management; the Office of Science and Information Management; and the Office of Science Advisor, Policy, and Engagement.⁴ The important technical research is organized into six research programs that cover all aspects of the statutory requirements of ORD: the Air, Climate, and Energy Program; the Chemical Safety for Sustainability Program; the Homeland Security and Emergency Response Program; the Health and Environmental Risk Assessment Program; the Safe and Sustainable Water Resources Program; and the Sustainable and Healthy Communities Program.⁴

Together, these ORD divisions “[provide] the foundation for credible decision-making to safeguard human health and ecosystems from environmental pollutants”,⁴ which is essential to EPA's ability to carry out its mission to “protect human health and the environment” and “ensure [that Americans] have clean air, land and water.”⁵ Furthermore, ORD research and scientific decision-making is required in multiple statutes such as the Clean Water Act, the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, the Toxic Substances Control Act, and the Clean Air Act.

¹ <https://www.usnews.com/news/top-news/articles/2025-02-27/white-house-walks-back-trump-statement-on-65-epa-staff-cuts>

² <https://www.eenews.net/articles/leaked-epa-layoff-plan-would-slash-science-office/>

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/17/climate/trump-eliminates-epa-science.html>

⁴ <https://www.epa.gov/aboutepa/about-office-research-and-development-ord>

⁵ <https://www.epa.gov/aboutepa/our-mission-and-what-we-do>

Firing the majority of ORD employees would be particularly harmful to EPA's work to address industrial pollution, contaminated air and drinking water, environmental health, and worsening natural disasters – and would especially hamper responses to emergencies such as the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, the Flint, Michigan water crisis, and the California wildfires.


Dismantling ORD's ability to fulfill its duties would jeopardize decades of progress in protecting public health and the environment. This includes everything from understanding and addressing the environmental causes of asthma in children and the long-term effects of exposure to lead pipes and paint in the home, to reducing the presence of forever chemicals in drinking water.

As such, we demand the immediate reversal of any plan, and the cessation of any activities, that would result in the mass firing of ORD employees or the dismantling of ORD as a whole. Additionally, we request answers to the following questions and a detailed explanation of how EPA intends to continue fulfilling its statutory obligations:


- 1) What is EPA's justification for proposing the mass firing of employees in ORD?
- 2) What are the anticipated impacts of this action on EPA's current and future scientific, public health, and environmental initiatives?
- 3) How has EPA consulted with internal and external experts – such as scientists, public health professionals, and other stakeholders – while considering this plan?
- 4) How does EPA plan to mitigate the loss of scientific expertise, institutional knowledge, and subject matter capacity resulting from this proposed action?
- 5) How would EPA maintain its ability to respond to environmental emergencies and fulfill its statutory responsibilities without ORD's technical staff?

The American people expect and deserve an EPA that protects public health and the environment – an effort that must be grounded in rigorous and independent science. That science depends on the expertise and dedication of ORD's employees. As such, we look forward to your prompt response and an explanation of how the EPA intends to uphold its important mission for our country.

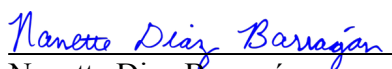
Sincerely,



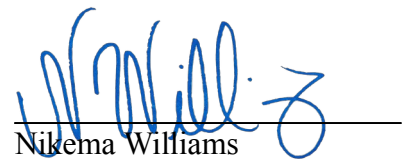
Greg Landsman
Member of Congress



Valerie P. Foushee
Member of Congress



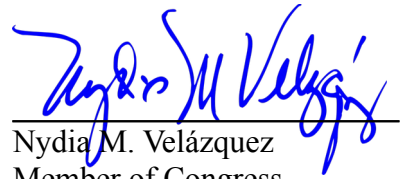
Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



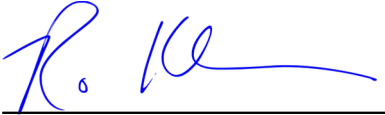
Nikema Williams
Member of Congress



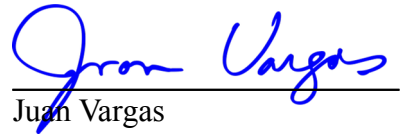
Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



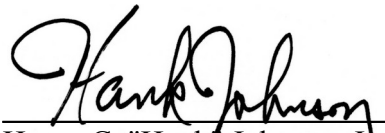
Juan Vargas
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Shontel M. Brown
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



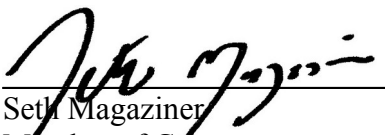
John Garamendi
Member of Congress



Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress



Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



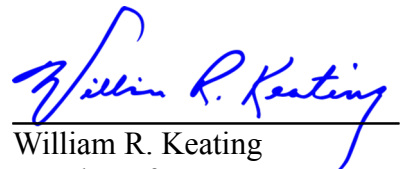
Seth Magaziner
Member of Congress



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



Kevin Mullin
Member of Congress





William R. Keating
Member of Congress



George Whitesides
Member of Congress

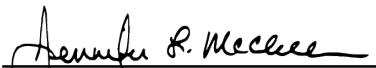

André Carson
Member of Congress



Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress



Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress



Deborah K. Ross
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



Jennifer L. McClellan
Member of Congress



Sean Casten
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress


Julia Brownley
Member of Congress


Maxine Waters
Member of Congress


Diana DeGette
Member of Congress


Bill Foster
Member of Congress

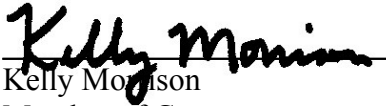

Haley M. Stevens
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



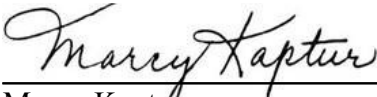
Brittany Petersen
Member of Congress



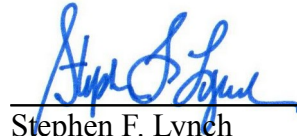
Kelly Morrison
Member of Congress



Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress



Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress



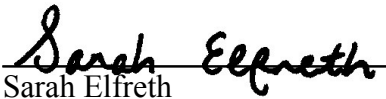
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



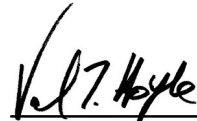
Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Sarah Elfreth
Member of Congress



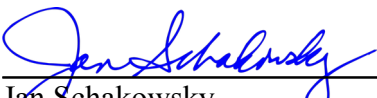
Val Hoyle
Member of Congress



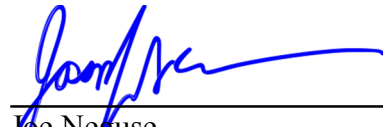
Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress



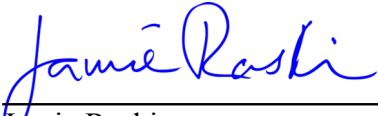
Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Joe Neguse
Member of Congress



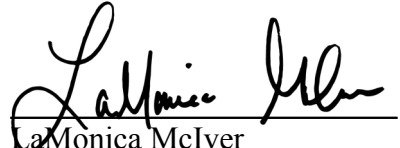
Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



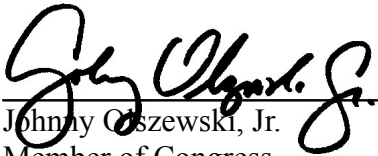
Dave Min
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress



LaMonica McIver
Member of Congress



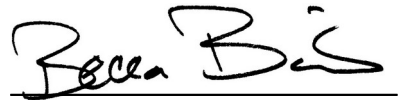
Johnny Oszewski, Jr.
Member of Congress



Emilia Strong Sykes
Member of Congress



Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



Becca Balint
Member of Congress



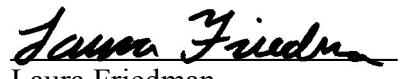
Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress



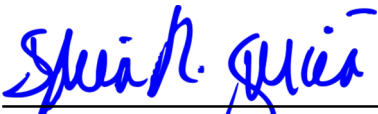
Raul Ruiz, M.D.
Member of Congress



Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress



Laura Friedman
Member of Congress



Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress



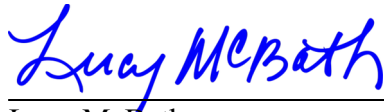
Chrissy Houlahan
Member of Congress



Al Green
Member of Congress
Scion of the Enslaved
Africans -
Sacrificed to Make America
Great



Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress



Lucy McBath
Member of Congress



Ami Bera, M.D.
Member of Congress



Marilyn Strickland
Member of Congress