

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 29, 2024

The Honorable Kiran Ahuja
Director
Office of Personnel Management
1900 E Street NW
Washington, DC 20415

Dear Director Ahuja:

I know the Biden Administration shares my commitment to building and maintaining a strong federal workforce that efficiently delivers critical services, programs, and benefits to all Americans. Key to that effort is a fair federal compensation system that attracts and retains skilled public servants. To that end, I write to urge swift finalization and implementation of the Federal Prevailing Rate Advisory Committee (FPRAC)'s draft proposal to consolidate Federal Wage System (FWS) wage areas within General Schedule (GS) locality pay areas.

The pay disparity between FWS and GS employees is not new to FPRAC or the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). In fact, the issue has been included in FPRAC's meeting agendas for years, and in October 2010 and March 2012, the Committee voted to consolidate FWS wage areas that lie within GS locality pay areas, subsequently recommending the change to OPM. Although OPM has previously declined to implement the change, you now have an opportunity to do right by the many federal agencies and thousands of federal employees who would benefit from this proposed reform.

In the meantime, this disparity continues to shortchange working people and families at dozens of federal facilities and military installations across the country, including several in my state of Pennsylvania. For example, at Tobyhanna Army Depot in Monroe County, salaried GS employees are paid based on the New York-Newark locality pay area, while their hourly FWS colleagues are paid based on the Scranton-Wilkes Barre wage area. Similarly, salaried workers at Letterkenny Army Depot in Franklin County are paid according to the Washington-Baltimore-Arlington locality pay area while hourly workers are compensated according to the Hagerstown-Martinsburg-Chambersburg wage area.

My office has heard directly from affected federal facility management, employees, and union representatives in Pennsylvania about the difficulties that this disparity poses to many aspects of their operations, including recruitment, retention, and employee morale. Because of the disparity, these facilities are losing talent critical to our national security, particularly at the journeyman

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level, to nearby public and private sector employers that offer more competitive wages. These realities threaten our federal workforce's ability to deliver for the American people.

I also understand that, in analyzing the implications of the proposed reform, you must consider the concerns cited by some FPRAC members, including those representing the Departments of Defense, Army, Navy, and Veterans Affairs. While I respect these concerns and recognize that Congress has to step up to appropriate sufficient funds to implement the proposed wage changes, I ask that you consider the following from Committee member Paul O'Connor: "There is a cost to adopting these recommended changes – there's also a cost if we don't." It's clear that the status quo isn't working for federal agencies or our federal workforce, and it's time to act.

I urge you to quickly finalize and implement the draft proposal advanced by FPRAC during its December 21, 2023, meeting. I am committed to seeing this reform through, and I welcome the opportunity to partner with you in getting it done. It's time that the federal workers impacted by this disparity in Pennsylvania and across the country are paid fairly and on par with their salaried colleagues.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "John Fetterman", with a large, stylized initial "J" and "F".

John Fetterman
United States Senator