January 9, 2017

President-elect Donald J. Trump
Trump Tower
725 5th Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Dear President-elect Trump:

We are writing to respectfully request that you reconsider your proposal to implement a so-called “federal hiring freeze” across the federal government.

On October 22, 2016, you announced that on your first day in office, the Trump Administration will pursue a “hiring freeze on all federal employees to reduce federal workforce through attrition...” While you indicated that your plan would exclude “military, public safety, and public health employees,” the nature and extent of these exemptions remain unclear. In support of this proposal, your presidential campaign issued a statement asserting that “in the long term, a smaller federal workforce will mean a more honest and effective government, in which it is harder to hide corruption.”

We are strongly concerned that a government-wide hiring freeze would have precisely the opposite effect for several reasons.

Firstly, the impact of hiring freezes enacted during previous Democratic and Republican Administrations demonstrates that such measures have not, in fact, significantly reduced the size of our federal workforce or enhanced federal government operations. Rather, they have served to decrease efficiency, transparency, and accountability government-wide at the expense of the public safety and American taxpayer dollars. Similar to your proposal, these hiring freezes included general human safety and other exemptions.

In 1982, GAO issued a seminal audit report, entitled “Recent Government-Wide Hiring Freezes Prove Ineffective in Managing Federal Employment,” that is still referenced as an authority in federal workforce management today. In reviewing a series of hiring freezes implemented during the Carter and Reagan Administrations, GAO concluded that while the freezes “provided an illusion of control” over federal workforce levels, they were “not an

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4 Id.
5 Id.
6 Id.
effective means of controlling federal employment.\textsuperscript{7} Agencies were simply forced to compensate for the inability to hire permanent staff by increasing their employment of temporary and part-time workers.\textsuperscript{8} They also resorted to an extraordinary reliance on private contractors.\textsuperscript{9}

GAO additionally found that the inability to fill vacancies on a permanent basis severely prevented federal workers and agencies from doing their jobs. In particular, “[b]ecause they ignored individual agencies’ missions, workload, and staffing requirements,” the hiring freezes disrupted critical agency operations and diminished federal oversight of agency programs.\textsuperscript{10} Chief among agency efforts that were undermined by the hiring freezes were pipeline safety monitoring, nuclear safety regulations, and the provision of timely and quality veterans’ healthcare.\textsuperscript{11} One hiring freeze implemented during the Carter Administration facilitated a clerical staff shortage at a Veterans Affairs Medical Center that required healthcare professionals to perform administrative duties over core job functions; this led to increased patient waiting times and delays in the processing of medical examinations.\textsuperscript{12} Similarly, past hiring freezes restricted the independent oversight work performed by Federal Offices of Inspectors General to identify waste, fraud, and abuse in federal spending.\textsuperscript{13}

In addition, a government-wide hiring freeze would exacerbate the serious workforce skills challenges facing a federal government that must continue to address a variety of evolving 21\textsuperscript{st} Century issues including cybersecurity, terrorism, consumer safety, and environmental threats. Since 2011, GAO has identified the existence of several “mission-critical skills gaps” across the federal government that pose “a high risk to the nation because they impede the government from cost effectively serving the public and achieving results.”\textsuperscript{14} The federal jobs associated with mission-critical skills gaps include those relating to cybersecurity, science, technology, math, engineering, auditing and inspections, procurement, and other key trades.\textsuperscript{15} In order to close the skills gaps for at-risk occupations, GAO has recommended that federal agencies undertake immediate and robust efforts to hire employees with expertise in these areas, especially given that approximately one-third of full time federal workers on board as of the end of Fiscal Year 2015 will be eligible to retire by 2019.\textsuperscript{16}

Furthermore, a federal hiring freeze would continue to stretch a dedicated federal workforce whose employment levels have remained relatively stagnant over the past several decades in comparison to the growing American public that it serves. Since the 1960s, our federal workforce has modestly increased by 10% to its current size of approximately 2.5 million employees while the American population has grown over 67% to over 323 million people.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{7} Id.
\textsuperscript{8} Id.
\textsuperscript{9} Id.
\textsuperscript{10} Id.
\textsuperscript{11} Id.
\textsuperscript{12} Id.
\textsuperscript{13} Id.
\textsuperscript{15} Id.
\textsuperscript{16} Id.
\textsuperscript{17} The White House, Analytical Perspectives, Budget of the U.S. Government, Fiscal Year 2017 (February 9, 2016) (online at https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/budget/fy2017/assets/spec.pdf).
Over this same time period, our private sector workforce has increased by roughly 136%.\textsuperscript{18} Devastating sequestration cuts, related furloughs, and even a 16-day government shutdown have already strained our federal workforce in recent years. A federal hiring freeze would impose additional constraints on federal agencies and employees who are already operating under difficult budgetary limitations.

For these reasons, we again respectfully urge you to reconsider your proposal to implement an across-the-board federal hiring freeze. We thank you in advance for your consideration of this letter.

Sincerely,

STEPHEN F. LYNCH
Member of Congress

STENY H. HOYER
Member of Congress

ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS
Member of Congress

GERALD E. CONNOLLY
Member of Congress

JOHN CONYERS, JR
Member of Congress

ADAM B. SCHIFF
Member of Congress

RAUL M. GRJALVA
Member of Congress

TIM RYAN
Member of Congress

\textsuperscript{18} Id.
MARCIA L. FUDGE
Member of Congress

BILL FOSTER
Member of Congress

BEN RAY LUJAN
Member of Congress

SANDER M. LEVIN
Member of Congress

DAVID SCOTT
Member of Congress

DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ
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JUDY CHU
Member of Congress

AL GREEN
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JAMIE RASKIN
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DANIEL LIPINSKI
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KATHERINE M. CLARK
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CEDRIC L. RICHMOND
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COLLIN C. PETERSON
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MARK POCAN
Member of Congress

DONALD NORCROSS
Member of Congress