

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

August 7, 2025

The Honorable Lee Zeldin
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Administrator Zeldin:

We are alarmed by your decision to dismantle the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Office of Research and Development (ORD), the cornerstone of scientific policymaking at the Agency. ORD research informed the implementation of the Safe Drinking Water Act and the Clean Air Act, ensuring that the air Americans breathe and the water they drink are safe and free from dangerous pollutants. Without ORD, EPA will be unable to fulfill its mission to protect human health and the environment.

Since its founding in 1970, the EPA has had an independent research arm that has ensured policy decisions are based on sound, unbiased scientific research. ORD studies water pollution, drinking water pollutants, toxic chemicals, smog, climate change, air contaminants, wildfire, and more. The office conducts this research at ten facilities across the country, located in Rhode Island, New Jersey, Ohio, the District of Columbia, North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Oklahoma, Minnesota, and Oregon.¹ This geographic diversity is critical to studying environmental challenges unique to different parts of the country and supporting regional research ecosystems.

Since January, approximately one-fifth of ORD employees have accepted early retirement.² Closing ORD through additional Reductions in Force and reassignments of ORD staff will deprive the Agency of the skilled workforce needed to ensure policies are grounded in the latest science. Gutting EPA's scientific brain trust will delay the development of new standards needed to protect the health and well-being of Americans. Additionally, the brain drain will hamper EPA's ability to understand and respond to future environmental risks.

Furthermore, shuttering ORD and moving the majority of EPA's scientific work into policy offices will open the door to political interference in EPA decision-making, undermining the effectiveness of EPA policies and undermining public trust in the EPA. The current structure of ORD insulates scientific work from policymaking to prevent undue influence. Transitioning EPA's scientific work into program offices will create opportunities for political interference, resulting in policies that fail to protect Americans and the environment.

Your mission to abandon unbiased science, slash EPA's workforce, and gut critical environmental protections does nothing to protect the health and safety of Americans and their environment. It will allow corporations to pollute with impunity as Americans get sicker. With this in mind, we request answers to the following questions.

1. What is your justification for closing ORD?

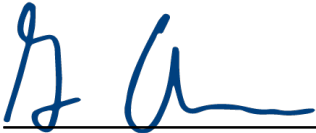
¹ <https://www.epa.gov/aboutepa/about-office-research-and-development-ord>

² <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2025/07/epa-office-research-development-closure-employees-layoffs/>

2. What is the timeline for the closure of ORD? When will the new Office of Applied Science and Environmental Solutions open? What is the plan to ensure critical research continues uninterrupted during this transition?
3. Will existing ORD labs continue to operate under the new Office of Applied Science and Environmental Solutions? Will staffing levels at ORD labs remain the same?
4. How many ORD employees have been assigned new positions within EPA? How many ORD employees have accepted these new positions?
5. How many ORD employees will receive Reduction in Force notices?
6. What is your plan to ensure research conducted by EPA employees is conducted without political interference?

We ask that you respond to these questions no later than August 21, 2025, and urge you to allow ORD to continue its vital work. The health of millions of Americans and well-being of our environment depend on it.

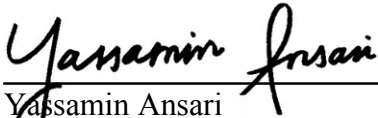
Sincerely,



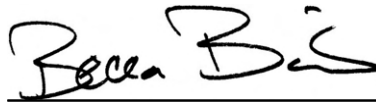
Gabe Amo
Member of Congress



Deborah K. Ross
Member of Congress



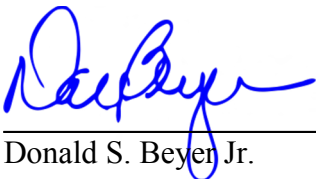
Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



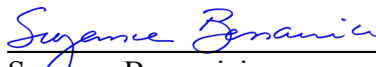
Becca Balint
Member of Congress



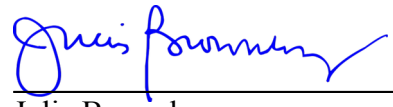
Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



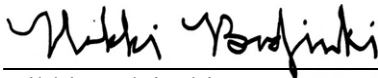
Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



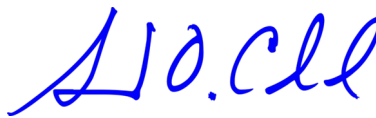
Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



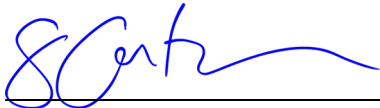
Nikki Budzinski
Member of Congress



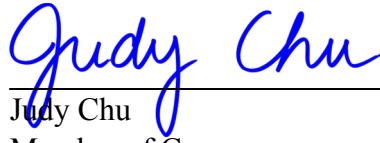
Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress



Ed Case
Member of Congress



Sean Casten
Member of Congress



Judy Chu
Member of Congress



Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



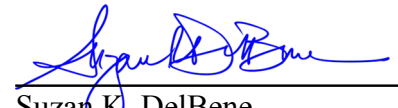
Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



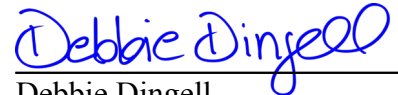
Suzan K. DelBene
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Mark DeSaulnier
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Debbie Dingell
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Dwight Evans
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Bill Foster
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Valerie P. Foushee
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Laura Friedman
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John Garamendi
Member of Congress



Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



Dan Goldman
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Pablo José Hernández
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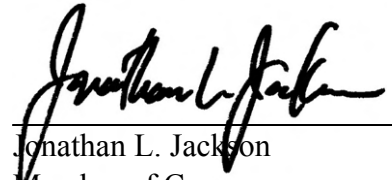
Chrissy Houlahan
Member of Congress



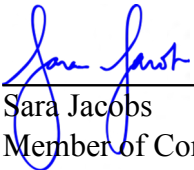
Val Hoyle
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress



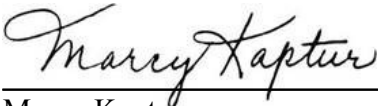
Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress



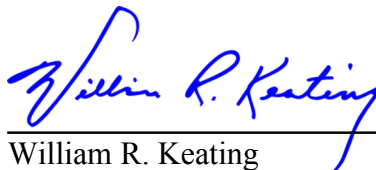
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Sydney Kamlager-Dove
Member of Congress



Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress



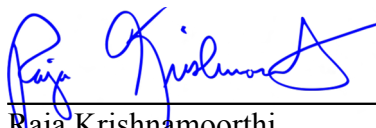
William R. Keating
Member of Congress



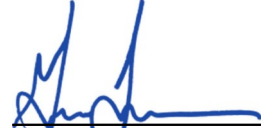
Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



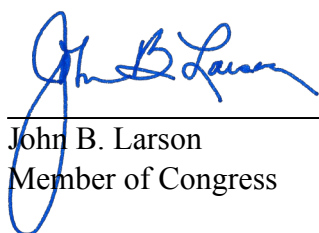
Raja Krishnamoorthi
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Greg Landsman
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Rick Larsen
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John B. Larson
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Summer L. Lee
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Zoe Lofgren
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Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



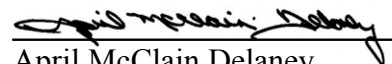
Seth Magaziner
Member of Congress



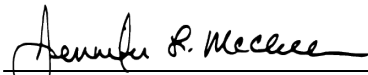
John W. Mannion
Member of Congress



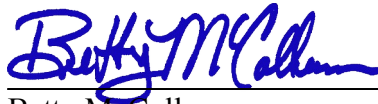
Sarah McBride
Member of Congress



April McClain Delaney
Member of Congress



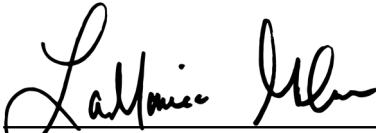
Jennifer L. McClellan
Member of Congress



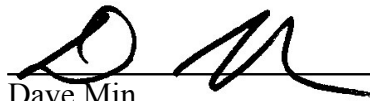
Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



LaMonica McIver
Member of Congress



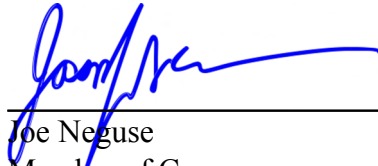
Dave Min
Member of Congress



Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



Kevin Mullin
Member of Congress



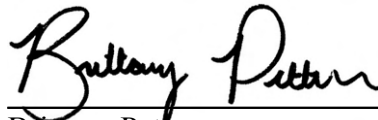
Joe Neguse
Member of Congress



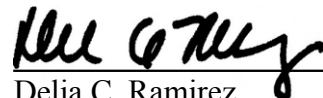
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress



Brittany Pettersen
Member of Congress



Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress



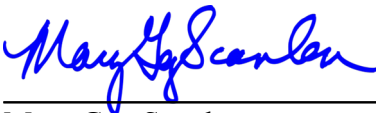
Luz M. Rivas
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Raul Ruiz, M.D.
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Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress



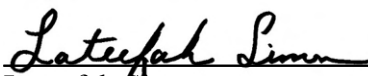
Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress



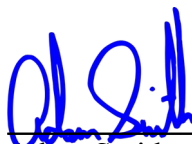
Jan Schakowsky
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Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress



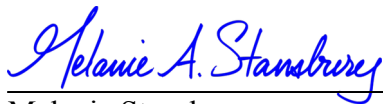
Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



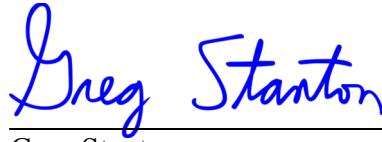
Adam Smith
Member of Congress



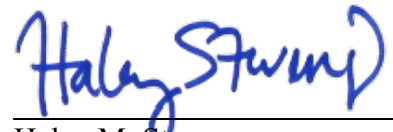
Darren Soto
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress



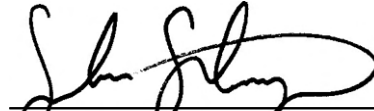
Greg Stanton
Member of Congress



Haley M. Stevens
Member of Congress



Marilyn Strickland
Member of Congress



Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress



Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress



Mark Takano
Member of Congress



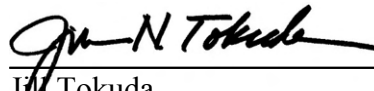
Shri Thanedar
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Dina Titus
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



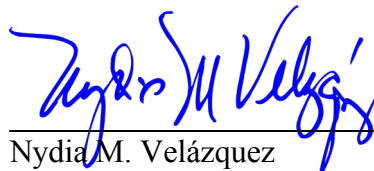
Jim Tokuda
Member of Congress



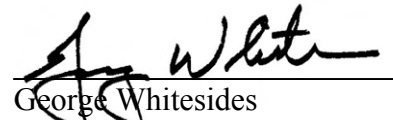
Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress



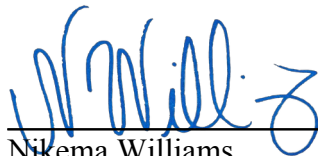
Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



George Whitesides
Member of Congress



Nikema Williams
Member of Congress