

Medici, Andrea

From: McCabe, Janet
Sent: Sunday, May 9, 2021 9:08 PM
To: Medici, Andrea
Cc: Utech, Dan; Brown, Phil; Sarah Riger; Al-Mudallal, Amer; Lynne, Diane; Hoppe, Allison; Vizian, Donna; Hoffer, Melissa; Blythers, Dorien; Packard, Elise
Subject: RE: Open Letter to Senior Leadership

Dear Andrea,

Thank you for your letter. I am responding on behalf of Administrator Regan and myself. You raise important issues. I would appreciate the opportunity to hear more from you and your union colleagues across the agency on issues that EPA employees and unions are facing.

I believe that our unions provide critical input into employee working conditions that can enrich the workplace and improve work processes. In the coming days I will reach out to union leadership to set up a meeting so I can hear about the issues most important to employee's elected representatives. I look forward to hearing from NETU on the issues you raise your letter at that meeting.

I know the agency's staff have been through a lot over the past several years. I am eager to hear how we can most effectively turn the page to meet the new challenges we are facing most effectively together.

As I mentioned in my initial message, I believe no matter the issue at hand, if we are committed to following the science and the law, transparently and with integrity, while ensuring the mission is always in mind, we will be able to succeed together. I look forward to meeting with you and working with you going forward.

Janet

From: Medici, Andrea <medici.andrea@epa.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, May 4, 2021 5:21 PM
To: Regan, Michael <Regan.Michael@epa.gov>; McCabe, Janet <McCabe.Janet@epa.gov>
Cc: Utech, Dan <Utech.Dan@epa.gov>; Brown, Phil <Brown.Phil@epa.gov>; Sarah Riger <sarah.riger@NTEU.ORG>; Al-Mudallal, Amer <Al-Mudallal.Amer@epa.gov>; Lynne, Diane <Lynne.Diane@epa.gov>; Hoppe, Allison <hoppe.allison@epa.gov>
Subject: Open Letter to Senior Leadership
Importance: High

May 4, 2021

Dear Administrator Regan and Deputy Administrator McCabe,

I am writing as the Chief Steward of NTEU Chapter 280 at EPA/HQ to call your attention to a serious issue regarding the health and well-being of your employees. For over a year, and despite clear guidance and directions from the Office of Personnel Management and the White House, many EPA supervisors and managers have not exercised maximum flexibility for the sake of their employees, many of whom have suffered illness, loss, and financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I do not mean telework, sick leave, or schedule flexibility. I mean demonstrating respect for an employee by acknowledging the pandemic's impacts

on work product or performance. The negative treatment of many employees has continued, even since the January 2021 change of presidential administration.

Throughout the pandemic, EPA's leaders and managers have repeatedly praised the success of our sudden shift to almost universal remote work settings in spite of the many significant challenges created by the pandemic. Employees who may have been accustomed to teleworking on an occasional basis were suddenly forced to telework while sharing living space and internet bandwidth with several other family members working and attending school online at the same time. A whole new layer of stress was added to all of our lives, affecting physical and mental health alike. As many managers have stated publicly, it is astounding how well EPA continued to fulfill its mission under such unprecedented circumstances.

However, behind this overall success story, individual employees have struggled to meet supervisors' expectations regarding their (often excessive) workload. Notwithstanding the public declarations of success, many individual employees were told in their October 2020 performance appraisals and April 2021 progress reviews that supervisors or managers were disappointed that the employees were sometimes less productive, less responsive, or less effective at parts of their jobs during this period. These comments resulted from employees' struggles to deal with pandemic challenges and burdens from every direction at once. Some of the events that occurred in these employees' lives included: contracting COVID-19; living with someone who contracted COVID-19; losing both parents to COVID-19; losing as many as five family members to COVID-19; single-parenthood (full custody) of four children in school (virtual learning) due to divorce from a physically abusive spouse; other serious health conditions, including cancer, requiring surgery, treatment, and hospitalization; and more. These supervisors clearly stated that their performance expectations are not changed in any way by the individual's difficulties. This is a small set of real examples from a handful of employees at HQ who have related their stories to me. The lack of compassion and support for the struggles of fellow human beings, much less for employees who depend on their managers for their very livelihood, was discouraging up until January 19, 2021; it is downright disturbing now, more than 100 days later.

It is critical to restoring trust between EPA's staff and management that employees receive supportive treatment from their supervisors across the board. I believe that this can only happen if you, at the very top, acknowledge the issue and take immediate action to hold supervisors accountable for applying compassion along with flexibility to their expectations of employees' performance in the face of the worst public health crisis in over a century. I would like to meet with you, even for a short video call, to discuss what steps would effectively convey to all EPA's managers the need to act consistently with the values expressed in Administrator Regan's compassionate email to employees after the death of Daunte Wright:

Let me say this: it's OK to not be OK right now. We cannot separate ourselves from the harsh, all too often cruel, realities of the world – and I do not expect you to.

Your employees want to build EPA back better, and to do that we need leaders who care more about our lives than about our deadlines. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Andrea E. Medici, Chief Steward
National Treasury Employees Union,
Chapter 280

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The measure of a country's greatness is its ability to retain compassion in times of crisis. -Thurgood Marshall,
US Supreme Court Justice (2 Jul 1908-1993)