



THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Office of the Board of Directors

March 8, 2021

The Honorable Janice Hahn
500 W. Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: 56-G. Five-Signature Letter to Support AFSCME 1902 Workers

I am writing in response to your motion for Los Angeles County's Chief Executive Officer to send a five-signature letter to the California State Assembly Joint Legislative Audit Committee requesting an investigation and audit of Metropolitan Water District of Southern California in response to employee complaints our board has received about sexual harassment and other misconduct in our workforce.

Metropolitan takes these complaints very seriously and responded by authorizing our Ethics Officer in November 2020 to enter into a contract with Shaw Law Group, a certified women-owned business enterprise with extensive expertise in EEO issues. The firm is currently conducting an independent and thorough review of allegations of systemic Equal Employment Opportunity-related discrimination, harassment, retaliation, and related concerns. Additionally, Metropolitan's General Manager and I sent a letter to the Joint Legislative Audit Committee on February 23, 2021 (attached) pledging Metropolitan's support and full cooperation with an audit should the State deem it necessary.

Under my leadership, Metropolitan's Board and executive management are committed to taking all steps necessary to foster and ensure a workplace that values equity, inclusion, and diversity – both in policy and in practice. I have no tolerance for sexual harassment or discrimination in any form, which is why I have been adamant about enforcing Metropolitan's policies prohibiting sexual harassment, discrimination, and retaliation. If the current independent review of our policies and practices identifies they have fallen short of our ethics and core values, you can be assured our Board and management will take immediate and decisive action to resolve those issues. Our employees and the customers we serve deserve no less.

The Honorable Janice Hahn

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If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to contact me at 213-217-7727.



Sincerely,
Gloria D. Gray
Chairwoman of the Board

cc: County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors

Attachment



THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

February 23, 2021

The Honorable Rudy Salas
Chair, Joint Legislative Audit Committee
1020 N Street, Room 107
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable John Laird
Vice Chair, Joint Legislative Audit Committee
1020 N Street, Room 107
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Metropolitan Water District of Southern California's Workplace Safety

Dear Assembly Member Salas and Senator Laird:

We are writing in response to the request made by Assembly Members Friedman, Gipson, and Jones-Sawyer to your committee for an outside, independent audit by California's State Auditor to investigate any wrongdoing within or by Metropolitan regarding workplace safety, harassment, bullying, and retaliation and to provide recommendations for further action, if necessary. As reported in the Los Angeles Times, several Metropolitan employees have raised concerns to our Board in recent months alleging incidents of sexual harassment, discrimination, and other misconduct. Our district's policies clearly state that we do not tolerate such behavior and, while we believe that to be both the intent and the practice in most instances, the concerns brought to our Board raise serious questions that demand answers.

In response to these issues, the Board, through a unanimous vote last fall, directed our independent Ethics Officer to engage an external law firm to conduct a thorough review of allegations of systemic Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) related discrimination, harassment, retaliation, and related concerns.

The Shaw Law Group is currently conducting this review to determine whether Metropolitan has employed best practices regarding complaints and investigations, if any additional steps are required on past cases, if there are systemic issues to be addressed in our policies, practices and procedures, and to identify areas for improvements where appropriate. The review also includes a climate assessment survey provided to all Metropolitan employees as a way to provide direct input and feedback. The Shaw Law Group, a certified women-owned business enterprise based in the Sacramento area, is a respected employment law firm with extensive expertise in EEO and

workplace investigations. The oversight for the review is being handled by Metropolitan's Ethics Officer who will be reporting directly to the Board.

Given our commitment to a thorough and independent review, the Shaw Law Group will be provided as much time as necessary to complete their review. When the review is completed, the results and recommendations will be presented to Metropolitan's Board for consideration and action, and to the Legislature and the general public to the extent that the information does not violate personal employee information. This is part of our ongoing commitment to engage in a transparent process to address the concerns that have been raised.

If the State deems it necessary to proceed with the audit, it would complement the review undertaken by Metropolitan's Board, and we would support the effort and provide our full cooperation. Ensuring that all our employees have the opportunity to thrive in a workplace that is free from sexual harassment and other misconduct is of paramount importance to our agency.

Sincerely,



Ms. Gloria Gray
Chairwoman of the Board
Metropolitan Water District
of Southern California



Mr. Jeffrey Kightlinger
General Manager
Metropolitan Water District
of Southern California

cc: Governor Gavin Newsom
The Honorable Toni G. Atkins
The Honorable Anthony Rendon
The Honorable Laura Friedman
The Honorable Mike Gipson
The Honorable Reginald Byron Jones-Sawyer, Jr.
The Honorable Steve Bennett
The Honorable Suzette Martinez Valladares
The Honorable Luz Rivas
The Honorable James Ramos
The Honorable Chris Holden
The Honorable Chad Mayes
The Honorable Jacqui Irwin
The Honorable Jesse Gabriel
The Honorable Adrin Nazarian
The Honorable Eloise Gómez Reyes
The Honorable Blanca Rubio
The Honorable Ed Chau
The Honorable Richard Bloom
The Honorable Wendy Carrillo

The Honorable Freddie Rodriguez
The Honorable Miguel Santiago
The Honorable Sydney Kamlager
The Honorable Phillip Chen
The Honorable Eduardo Garcia
The Honorable Lisa Calderon
The Honorable Cristina Garcia
The Honorable Sabrina Cervantes
The Honorable Jose Medina
The Honorable Autumn Burke
The Honorable Sharon Quirk-Silva
The Honorable Al Muratsuchi
The Honorable Kelly Seyarto
The Honorable Steven Choi
The Honorable Tom Daly
The Honorable Patrick O'Donnell
The Honorable Randy Voepel
The Honorable Janet Nguyen
The Honorable Laurie Davies
The Honorable Cottie Petrie-Norris
The Honorable Marie Waldron
The Honorable Tasha Boerner Horvath
The Honorable Brian Maienschein
The Honorable Christopher Ward
The Honorable Lorena Gonzalez
The Honorable Robert Hertzberg
The Honorable Monique Limón
The Honorable Connie Leyva
The Honorable Scott Wilk
The Honorable Susan Rubio
The Honorable Rosilicie Ochoa Bogh
The Honorable Maria Elena Durazo
The Honorable Anthony Portantino
The Honorable Ben Allen
The Honorable Henry Stern
The Honorable Melissa Melendez
The Honorable Josh Newman
The Honorable Richard Roth
The Honorable Bob Archuleta
The Honorable Lena Gonzalez
The Honorable Thomas Umberg
The Honorable Steven Bradford
The Honorable Patricia Bates
The Honorable Dave Min
The Honorable Brian Jones
The Honorable Ben Hueso



Metropolitan's Board and Management Respond to Allegations of Discrimination, Safety Issues and Harassment in the Workplace

March 8, 2021

"Under my leadership, Metropolitan's Board has been unequivocal that we will not tolerate sexual harassment, discrimination, retaliation and other forms of misconduct towards or among our employees. If it is found that our practices and policies have fallen short of this goal, we are prepared to act swiftly and decisively.

- Chairwoman Gloria D. Gray

- The Board responded to employee comments alleging systemic harassment by authorizing Metropolitan's Ethics Officer in November 2020 to enter into a contract with Shaw Law Group, a certified women-owned business enterprise with extensive expertise in EEO issues. The firm is currently conducting **an independent and thorough review** of allegations of systemic Equal Employment Opportunity-related discrimination, harassment, retaliation and related concerns. To date the firm has:
 - Conducted over 50 hours of interviews
 - Reviewed documents regarding policies and prior investigations of EEO complaints
 - Issued a climate assessment survey taken by 1,398 of the District's 1,854 employees
 - Begun interviews with more than 125 employees who requested to speak to the firm and additional interviews with other staff and management
- The **health and safety** of Metropolitan employees is paramount to our organization. Efforts over the past decade have resulted in the District's work injury rates now being significantly lower than state and federal averages, and work is ongoing to build on these improvements.
- A February 23, 2021 letter was sent to the Joint Legislative Audit Committee pledging Metropolitan's **support and full cooperation** with an audit should the State deem it necessary.
- Metropolitan's **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council** was created in 2020. The Chairwoman and executive management attend the meetings of the Council, which is comprised of leadership from employee resource groups and employee bargaining units. Actions of the Council so far include:
 - Providing mandatory training on unconscious bias to supplement existing mandatory training on sexual harassment prevention and other workplace conduct
 - Retaining the services of an independent Diversity, Equity and Inclusion consulting firm to perform a thorough culture assessment and provide a roadmap for improvement
 - Taking steps for greater diversity, equity and inclusion in Metropolitan's business practices to improve opportunities for underserved and underrepresented communities
- To ensure **greater transparency** as employee issues are being reviewed, a new [web page](#) on Metropolitan's website provides employees and the public with resources and documents related to the independent review.
- Metropolitan has **fully cooperated** with the Los Angeles Times in response to Public Records Act requests for information about employee issues and District responses.