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March 6, 2025

Vince Micone
Acting Secretary of Labor
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Acting Secretary Micone:

We write seeking documents and information from the Department of Labor (Labor Department) about office closures and staff reductions which threaten the ability of the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) to do its job of protecting the nation's mine workers from unsafe and deadly mine conditions.

In recent days, our staff has received alarming reports about the termination of leases for MSHA field and district offices. The news media have reported at least two office closures, in Hazard, Kentucky, and Craig, Colorado.¹ A White House webpage lists 26 additional office closures² (as well as the Arlington, Virginia, headquarters that MSHA had already begun closing during the Biden Administration in order to move to the flagship Labor Department headquarters in Washington, D.C.³). Information provided to our staff suggests that as many as 30 field offices and nine district offices may be imminently shuttered.

The prospect of widespread office closures adds to our worries from the news that MSHA was one of six Labor Department agencies to suffer staff reductions from firings and inducements to quit.⁴ As we await responses to our letter of February 27, 2025, inquiring about the extent of firings at the Labor Department in general, our staff has subsequently been informed that MSHA abruptly

¹ Ward Jolles, *KY Social Security Branches, Mining Safety Office Likely to Close Within 30 Days After DOGE Cuts*, WAVE3.COM (Feb. 28, 2025), <https://www.wave3.com/2025/03/01/ky-social-security-branches-mining-safety-office-likely-close-within-30-days-after-doge-cuts/>; Marc Sallinger, *Elon Musk's DOGE Cuts Have Reached Colorado*, 9NEWS (Feb. 26, 2025), <https://www.9news.com/article/money/elon-musk-doge-cuts-colorado/73-0cf1999b-5a32-4d25-9486-150ac8569ef1>.

² *Savings*, DOGE.GOV, <https://doge.gov/savings> (last visited Mar. 3, 2025).

³ MINE SAFETY & HEALTH ADMIN., FY 2025 CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET JUSTIFICATION 74 (2024), <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/general/budget/2025/CBJ-2025-V2-13.pdf>.

⁴ Rebecca Rainey, *Trump's Federal Workforce Cuts Hit Labor Department Enforcement*, BLOOMBERG (Feb. 24, 2025), <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/daily-labor-report/trumps-federal-workforce-cuts-hit-labor-department-enforcement>.

withdrew safety inspector job offers from dozens, perhaps as many as 90 people, who had accepted the offers and were undergoing physical fitness reviews and completing relevant paperwork. Arbitrary cutbacks on staffing make no sense when MSHA is already dangerously low on inspectors.⁵

If MSHA is robbed of all this capacity, miners' lives will be at risk. One of the lessons of the Upper Big Branch Mine disaster, according to MSHA's own internal investigation, is that staffing disruptions at the managerial level resulted in MSHA's inspectors failing to adequately address smaller-scale methane explosions in the months leading up to the massive explosion that killed 29 miners fifteen years ago this April.⁶ To prevent such tragedies, MSHA needs people—perhaps most acutely, inspectors who satisfy the legal requirement to inspect every active surface mine twice a year and every active underground mine four times a year.⁷

MSHA also needs space. Active coal and metal/nonmetal mines are scattered across the country, in almost every congressional district.⁸ MSHA must be in position to inspect every active mine, respond swiftly to fatalities and imminent hazards, and conduct investigations. Already some rural mines may be as much as a day's drive from the nearest field office. MSHA cannot protect miners if all the nation's mines are not within its reach.

We take seriously the charge of the Committee on Education and Workforce under clause 1(e)(12) of Rule X of the Rules of the House of Representatives to exercise jurisdiction over the “[w]elfare of miners.” Accordingly, we request your responses by no later than March 20, 2025, to the following:

1. Since January 20, 2025, how many leases for MSHA offices or other spaces other than the Arlington, Virginia, headquarters have been canceled or otherwise designated for non-renewal (hereinafter “terminated”)?
2. Please provide an Excel spreadsheet with the following information about each MSHA lease terminated since January 20, 2025, other than the Arlington, Virginia, headquarters (hereinafter, the “affected leases”), under the following columns:

⁵ Tre'Vaughn Howard, *Trump's Mine Safety Nominee Inherits Workforce Cuts, Legal Fight*, BLOOMBERG (Feb. 26, 2025), <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/daily-labor-report/trumps-mine-safety-nominee-inherits-workforce-cuts-legal-fight>; Fatima Hussein, *Lack of MSHA Inspectors Could Complicate Its Coming Silica Plan*, BLOOMBERG (Dec. 16, 2021), <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/safety/lack-of-msha-inspectors-could-complicate-its-coming-silica-plan> (reporting that MSHA's inspectorate fell by nearly 40% from 2011 to 2021). These concerns are not new for MSHA. See DANIEL BERTONI, U.S. GOV'T ACCOUNTABILITY OFF., GAO-07-704R, MSHA'S MINE INSPECTOR RECRUITING AND WORKFORCE PLANNING (2007), <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-07-704r.pdf>; U.S. GEN. ACCOUNTING OFF., GAO-03-945, MINE SAFETY: MSHA DEVOTES SUBSTANTIAL EFFORT TO ENSURING THE SAFETY AND HEALTH OF COAL MINERS, BUT ITS PROGRAMS COULD BE STRENGTHENED (2003), <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-03-945.pdf> (recommending that MSHA develop a plan for addressing anticipated staffing shortages).

⁶ MINE SAFETY & HEALTH ADMIN., U.S. DEP'T OF LAB., INTERNAL REVIEW OF MSHA'S ACTIONS AT THE UPPER BIG BRANCH MINE-SOUTH PERFORMANCE COAL COMPANY, MONTCOAL, RALEIGH COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA 179-181 (2012), <https://arlweb.msha.gov/performancecoal/UBBInternalReview/UBBInternalReviewReportNoappx.pdf> (noting role of lack of continuity in District Manager and field office supervisor positions).

⁷ Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977, Pub. L. No. 91-173, § 103(a) (1977).

⁸ Nat'l Inst. for Occ. Safety & Health, *Active Mining Operations, 2023*, CDC.GOV, <https://wwwn.cdc.gov/NIOSH-Mining/MMWC/MineMap/Pins>.

- a. Region;
 - b. District;
 - c. Function of space (district office, field office, etc.);
 - d. Street address;
 - e. City;
 - f. State; and
 - g. ZIP code.
3. Did the General Services Administration (GSA) consult with MSHA or the Labor Department before identifying the affected leases for termination or terminating the affected leases (yes/no)?
 4. Was MSHA informed by GSA about terminations of the affected leases before receiving communications from landlords about such lease terminations (yes/no)?
 5. Provide all documents and communications since January 20, 2025, including messages on any digital communications platform, about the termination of the affected leases, including the following:
 - a. Documents and communications establishing targets or quotas for terminating Labor Department leases, criteria for terminating any Labor Department leases, or identifying specific Labor Department leases to be terminated, including the affected leases;
 - b. Documents and communications about any consultations, inside or outside the Labor Department, about Labor Department leases to be terminated;
 - c. Documents and communications about any meetings regarding the termination of Labor Department leases; and
 - d. Documents and communications of the Labor Department learning about any of the affected leases being terminated.
 6. How many job offers to prospective MSHA inspectors were revoked since January 20, 2025?
 7. Please provide an Excel spreadsheet with the number of MSHA full-time equivalent staff (FTEs) authorized at the end of Fiscal Year 2024, the number of FTEs authorized for Fiscal Year 2025 as of December 31, 2024, and the number of FTEs fired since January 20, 2025, for each of the following functional areas:
 - a. Enforcement;
 - b. Standards Development;
 - c. Assessments;
 - d. Education Policy and Development;
 - e. Technical Support;
 - f. Program Administration; and
 - g. Program Evaluation and Information Resources.
 8. Please provide an Excel spreadsheet specifying, for each MSHA district and field office, the number of FTEs authorized at the end of Fiscal Year 2024 and the number of FTEs terminated since January 20, 2025.
 9. Please explain how MSHA will address President Trump's mandate for maximizing federal employees' return to office-based work in light of the termination of the affected leases.
 10. What plan, if any, does MSHA have to ensure that it can comply with its legal duties and implement regulations in light of the staff and lease terminations since January 20, 2025?

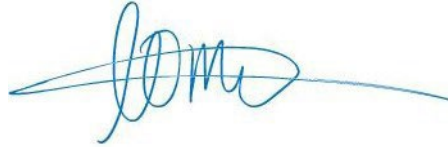
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Please send all official correspondence and information related to these requests to the Committee's Democratic staff at by emailing Eleazar Padilla at Eleazar.Padilla@mail.house.gov. Should you have any questions about this request, please contact Bob Shull with the Democratic staff of the House Committee on Education and Workforce at Robert.Shull@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT
Ranking Member



ILHAN OMAR
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Workforce Protections

CC: The Hon. Tim Walberg, Chairman, House Committee on Education and Workforce
The Hon. Ryan Mackenzie, Chairman, Workforce Protections Subcommittee