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September 22, 2023

The Honorable Douglas L. Parker  
Assistant Secretary for Occupational Safety and Health  
U.S. Department of Labor  
200 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20210

Dear Mr. Parker:

We write regarding next week's Committee on Education and the Workforce's Subcommittee on Workforce Protections hearing entitled, "Examining the Policies and Priorities of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration," at which you will be testifying.

This hearing will occur just days before a potential government shutdown initiated by the House Republicans. According to the Joint Economic Committee (JEC), a government shutdown would significantly impact the U.S. economy.<sup>1</sup> JEC noted it would "reduce economic output and harm consumer confidence as many important government functions would shut down due to lack of funds."<sup>2</sup> Additionally, JEC pointed out that a government shutdown would be particularly disruptive following the recent downgrade of U.S. treasuries by the credit agency Fitch and "create more doubt about whether the United States can reliably manage its finances."<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, one Republican Member of the Committee said that, "[w]e should not fear a government shutdown. . . . Most of the American people won't even miss it if the government is shut down temporarily."<sup>4</sup> We strongly disagree and believe it is imperative for the American people to understand what's at stake if House Republicans succeed in shutting down the

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<sup>1</sup> *The Economic Costs of a Republican Shutdown*, Joint Economic Committee (Sept. 5, 2023), <https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/cache/files/779433e8-f659-4950-8c9c-46ca45656fbc/jec-fact-sheet---the-economic-costs-of-a-republican-shutdown.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> Ron Elving, *The Freedom Caucus' Shutdown Threat Recalls Tactics of Past House Rebels*, NPR (Aug. 26, 2023), <https://www.npr.org/2023/08/26/1195982210/the-freedom-caucus-shutdown-threat-recalls-tactics-of-past-house-rebels>.

The Honorable Douglas L. Parker

June 6, 2023

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government. We trust your testimony will detail how a government shutdown would impact the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA's) critical mission to protect workers.

Additionally, this recent threat of a government shutdown comes on the heels of proposed cuts by House Republicans to the Department of Labor. House Democrats strongly supported the Biden Administration's Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 budget that proposed an increase to OSHA of more than \$106 million over the FY 2023 level.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, House Republicans rejected the proposed budget increase and, in July, put forward a spending bill that cut OSHA's budget by \$95 million below the FY 2023 enacted level.<sup>6</sup> But that cut appears to be not extreme enough for House Republicans. As of this writing, they are pressing for even bigger budget cuts across the board with many Republican Members insisting on a return to the FY 2022 topline spending level.<sup>7</sup> To that end, it is imperative that we get in the hearing record, through your testimony, what returning to the FY 2022 level would mean for OSHA. Specifically, we would like you to quantify how many fewer workplace inspections would occur; explain the effect on your capacity to develop standards to address unmet needs for workplace protections; and describe other projected constraints on your ability to protect workers.

It is regrettable that the threat of a government shutdown seems more certain. We, therefore, insist on your discussion of this shutdown – along with the threat of extreme budget cuts – at Wednesday's hearing.

We look forward to your testimony.

Sincerely,



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**ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT**  
Ranking Member



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**ALMA S. ADAMS, Ph.D.**  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Workforce Protections

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<sup>5</sup> See FY 2024 Budget, U.S. Dep't of Labor, <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/general/budget/2024/FY2024BIB.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> See Press Release, House Appropriations Committee, *House Republican Funding Bill Kicks Teachers Out of Classrooms, Takes Away Job Opportunities, and Harms Women and Children* (July 13, 2023), <https://democrats-appropriations.house.gov/news/press-releases/house-republican-funding-bill-kicks-teachers-out-of-classrooms-takes-away-job>.

<sup>7</sup> See *NO SECURITY, NO FUNDING*, House Freedom Caucus, (Aug. 21, 2023), <https://www.politico.com/f/?id=0000018a-1884-db03-a3ce-dbc7a3e10000>