President Janet Napolitano  
Office of the President  
University of California  
1111 Franklin St., 12th Floor  
Oakland, CA 94607

Dear President Napolitano:

As members of California’s congressional delegation, we write regarding the University of California’s contract negotiations with its postdoctoral scholars (postdocs) who are represented by UAW 5810. Specifically, we urge you to reach a settlement that ensures strong protections for postdocs.

With doctoral degrees and expertise in specific areas, postdocs add tremendous value to the University of California. However, we are concerned that certain obstacles undermine the University’s ability to attract and retain the most promising and accomplished scholars, especially women and people of color. For example, postdocs earn low wages, receive short appointments, and may even suffer from abusive conduct, threatening workforce stability. Additionally troubling is that female postdocs are too often disadvantaged in the workplace after having children or subjected to sexual harassment.

Still, the University can make meaningful progress on recruiting and retaining talented scientists by strengthening labor protections and benefits in the current contract negotiations. For example, we urge you to provide subsidies to reimburse the steep child care costs faced by postdocs, many of whom spend up to 30 percent of their salary on childcare. The University should also provide its postdocs eight weeks of paid parental leave, the same amount that the National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Health (NIH) provide their postdoctoral fellows working at the University of California. These types of family-friendly policies have proven successful in retaining female employees in private businesses and at universities.

Additionally, we urge you to commit to fair pay for postdocs commensurate with their educational experience and the value added to the University. After announcing new overtime rules, NIH Director Francis Collins and Labor Secretary Thomas Perez wrote, “We agree with a number of leaders in biomedical science who have...[argued] that postdoctoral fellows are generally paid salaries that do not adequately reflect their advanced education and expertise.”¹ We strongly echo Collins and Perez’s support for higher salaries.

We believe that these ideas will help the University of California to attract and retain the best researchers, particularly women and people of color. We encourage you to consider them in your negotiations with UAW 5810. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Ted W. Lieu  
Member of Congress

Mark Takano  
Member of Congress

Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress

Lois Capps  
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

Michael M. Honda  
Member of Congress

Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress

Janice Hahn  
Member of Congress

Sam Farr  
Member of Congress

Loretta Sanchez  
Member of Congress

Adam B. Schiff  
Member of Congress

Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress

Judy Chu  
Member of Congress

Jerry McNerney  
Member of Congress
Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress

John Garamendi
Member of Congress

Marc DeSaulnier
Member of Congress

Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress

Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

Maxine Waters
Member of Congress

Xavier Becerra
Member of Congress

Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress

Karen Bass
Member of Congress

Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress

Norma J. Torres
Member of Congress

Jackie Speier
Member of Congress

Pete Aguilar
Member of Congress