January 10, 2019

The Honorable Russell Vought
Acting Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Mr. Vought:

We are writing to urge you to direct federal agencies to work with contractors to provide back pay to compensate low- and middle-income contractor employees for the wages they have lost as a result of not being able to report to work during this government shutdown.

Contract workers and their families should not suffer the consequences of a shutdown that they did not cause. Low-wage service contract workers perform jobs that are absolutely vital to the government, such as food service, security, and custodial work. Many of these workers live paycheck-to-paycheck, and cannot afford to pay their rent and other bills if the shutdown continues.

After past shutdowns, contractor employees have generally not received back pay. In addition to our fight to protect federal workers who are being hurt by this shutdown, we are committed to righting this wrong for contractor employees. Government contracts typically have provisions to modify the terms of the contract. Federal contracting officers should use these provisions to work with contractors to provide back pay for employees who lost wages as a result of the government shutdown.

Providing back pay to these low- and middle-income contractor employees who are furloughed by their employers is the right thing to do, and it is in the federal government's best interest to provide funding to the extent necessary to ensure that contractors deliver back pay to their workers. Contractor employees cannot afford the chaos and uncertainty of government shutdowns, and some of these workers may seek other jobs if back pay is not provided to compensate for shutdown-related losses.

Most of all, this wasteful and destructive government shutdown must come to an end. We all support the legislation passed by the House of Representatives to reopen the government, which mirrors legislation that previously passed the Senate with overwhelming bipartisan support.

We urge you to take immediate steps to ensure that contractor employees get the back pay that they deserve by providing clear directions for agencies and contractors to do so.

Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,
Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator

Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator

Doug Jones  
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator

Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator

Tina Smith  
United States Senator

Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator

Tim Kaine  
United States Senator

Kirsten E. Gillibrand  
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator

Tom Udall  
United States Senator
Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator

Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator

Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator

Jack Reed  
United States Senator

Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator

Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator

Ron Wyden  
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

Kamala D. Harris  
United States Senator

Robert Menendez  
United States Senator

Thomas R. Carper  
United States Senator

Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator
Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator