



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**Pipeline and Hazardous  
Materials Safety  
Administration**

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

December 13, 2023

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Chair, Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray:

The House directed (House Report 117-99) that the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) provide “(1) staffing and hiring plans for fiscal year 2023, (2) information on the actual turnover and hiring in fiscal year 2022, and (3) outcomes for the workforce retention and recruitment strategies PHMSA implemented or continued in fiscal year 2022.” This is requested within 120 days after enactment of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (Pub. L. 117-103). I have enclosed PHMSA’s report that meets this request.

PHMSA continues to work toward its Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 employment goal of 365 Pipeline Safety personnel. Pipeline Safety inspectors typically are engineers, who are difficult to recruit and retain, as there is a high demand for this skill set in the regulated industry. As a result of aggressive hiring strategies implemented in FY 2022, the Office of Pipeline Safety had 301 (89 percent) of its positions filled as of September 30, 2022. In FY 2023, PHMSA continued to implement hiring solutions, such as special pay rates, recruitment and retention bonuses, tuition assistance, and student loan repayment. PHMSA will continue to use innovative hiring and retention strategies as detailed in the report.

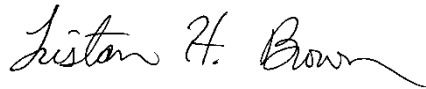
Should you require any further information or assistance, please feel free to call me or have your staff contact Damon Hill, Deputy Director of the Office of Governmental, International, and Public Affairs, by phone at 202-591-6233 or by e-mail at [damon.hill@dot.gov](mailto:damon.hill@dot.gov).

The Honorable Patty Murray

Page 2

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tristan H. Brown". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Tristan H. Brown  
Deputy Administrator

Enclosure



U.S. Department  
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1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

December 13, 2023

The Honorable Susan Collins  
Vice Chair, Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Vice Chair Collins:

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Tristan H. Brown  
Deputy Administrator

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U.S. Department  
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1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
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December 13, 2023

The Honorable Brian Schatz  
Chair, Subcommittee on Transportation,  
Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Schatz:

The House directed (House Report 117-99) that the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) provide “(1) staffing and hiring plans for fiscal year 2023, (2) information on the actual turnover and hiring in fiscal year 2022, and (3) outcomes for the workforce retention and recruitment strategies PHMSA implemented or continued in fiscal year 2022.” This is requested within 120 days after enactment of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (Pub. L. 117-103). I have enclosed PHMSA’s report that meets this request.

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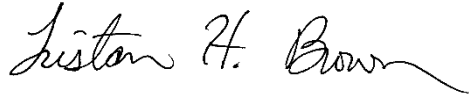
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Tristan H. Brown  
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U.S. Department  
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1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
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December 13, 2023

The Honorable Cindy Hyde-Smith  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Transportation,  
Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Ranking Member Hyde-Smith:

The House directed (House Report 117-99) that the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) provide “(1) staffing and hiring plans for fiscal year 2023, (2) information on the actual turnover and hiring in fiscal year 2022, and (3) outcomes for the workforce retention and recruitment strategies PHMSA implemented or continued in fiscal year 2022.” This is requested within 120 days after enactment of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (Pub. L. 117-103). I have enclosed PHMSA’s report that meets this request.

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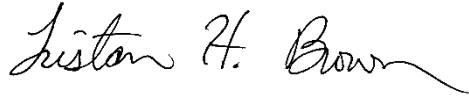
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The Honorable Honorable Cindy Hyde-Smith

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Tristan H. Brown  
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1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
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December 13, 2023

The Honorable Kay Granger  
Chairwoman, Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Granger:

The House directed (House Report 117-99) that the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) provide “(1) staffing and hiring plans for fiscal year 2023, (2) information on the actual turnover and hiring in fiscal year 2022, and (3) outcomes for the workforce retention and recruitment strategies PHMSA implemented or continued in fiscal year 2022.” This is requested within 120 days after enactment of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (Pub. L. 117-103). I have enclosed PHMSA’s report that meets this request.

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The Honorable Kay Granger

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Tristan H. Brown  
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December 13, 2023

The Honorable Rosa L. DeLauro  
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member DeLauro:

The House directed (House Report 117-99) that the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) provide “(1) staffing and hiring plans for fiscal year 2023, (2) information on the actual turnover and hiring in fiscal year 2022, and (3) outcomes for the workforce retention and recruitment strategies PHMSA implemented or continued in fiscal year 2022.” This is requested within 120 days after enactment of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (Pub. L. 117-103). I have enclosed PHMSA’s report that meets this request.

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Tristan H. Brown  
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December 13, 2023

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Transportation, and  
Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cole:

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1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
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December 13, 2023

The Honorable Mike Quigley  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Transportation,  
Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member Quigley:

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**Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA)  
Report to Congress on the Office of Pipeline Safety  
FY 2022 Hiring Actuals and FY 2023 Hiring Plan**

**FY 2022 Hiring and Turnover**

In FY 2022, PHMSA's Office of Pipeline Safety maintained 301 full time permanent positions or FTP from October 1, 2021, to September 30, 2022, with 35 hires and 35 separations occurring throughout the year. Although turnover was experienced—like many public and private sector agencies during and after the pandemic—departing staff were replaced with new hires, resulting in steady staffing levels. With recent approval of additional hiring incentives, and new outreach strategies, strong onboarding protocols that build in retention early, PHMSA is hopeful it can increase hires and reduce turnover.

**FY 2022 Pipeline Safety Hiring and Turnover**

<b>Onboard October 1, 2021</b>	<b>Hiring FY 2022</b>	<b>Separations FY 2022</b>	<b>Onboard September 30, 2022</b>	<b>Turnover Rate FY 2022<sup>1</sup></b>
301	35	(35)	301	12%

<sup>1</sup>Turnover calculated using the number of separations divided by the average number of Pipeline Safety employees onboard of 301 in FY 2022.

During this period, PHMSA hired 35 Pipeline Safety employees, with 24 of them being inspection and enforcement personnel. At the same time, 35 employees separated from the Office of Pipeline Safety, with 20 being inspection and enforcement personnel. The turnover rate was 12 percent, calculated using the number of separations divided by the average number of Pipeline Safety employees onboard of 301 in FY 2022.

**FY2022 Recruitment Strategies Outcome**

In FY 2022, PHMSA's overall recruitment strategies were successful. However, retaining valuable employees posed a significant challenge. PHMSA's strategies of increasing brand awareness (including utilizing new platforms like Glassdoor, LinkedIn, Handshake, etc.) and expanding job fairs successfully attracted more interest and recruited more candidates. Additionally, the use of the Direct Hire Authority (DHA) increased the agency's ability to appoint qualified candidates relating to pipeline safety.

Despite these successes, retention data showed that PHMSA lost employees to other government agencies, the private sector, and retirement. In response, the FY2023 hiring plan focuses on building a strong employee pipeline and implementing incentives to retain valuable employees. PHMSA plans to continue the successful strategies of increasing brand awareness and expanding job fairs while building a work environment that supports career growth and professional development.

**FY 2023 Pipeline Safety Hiring Plan**

In FY 2022, PHMSA's Office of Pipeline Safety had funding for 337 positions, and as of September 30, 2022, the office had filled 301 (89 percent) positions. Moving to FY 2023, PHMSA implemented an aggressive recruitment and retention strategy, which continued to focus on soon-to-be college graduates and recent graduates for entry-level opportunities, internships, and career-ladder positions to create a pipeline of future engineers, as well as new financial incentives for more experienced engineers and inspectors.

While PHMSA has successfully recruited qualified applicants, the data shows that retaining selected employees is the biggest challenge. The organization is actively refocusing its efforts on retention strategies to address this issue effectively. These recruitment and retention strategies include group incentives, student loan repayment, OPM special pay tables, and career ladder positions.

PHMSA acknowledges that disparity between public and private sector salaries is a significant factor in its recruitment and retention challenges. As the job market and economy evolve, it is difficult to predict when and how private-sector employment will become more attractive to its employees. However, PHMSA is monitoring these trends closely and adjusting its recruitment and retention strategies accordingly, including new outreach efforts to engineering programs across the country to attract alumni and leverage PHMSA's existing alumni pool, individually. PHMSA has also expanded its footprint—with engineer/inspectors working remotely in states where we previously did not have employees—such as North Dakota. We now have employees in 36 states, which has allowed us to pull from a bigger pool of potential candidates and meet growing demands for remote work. Because our engineer inspectors are both on the road and convene in person with each other for inspections and coordination, we believe this will help attract and retain top talent.

In FY 2023, PHMSA's Office of Pipeline Safety received funding for 365 Pipeline Safety positions. The organization implemented the following strategies to attract and retain qualified candidates:

- Continued using the current OPM-approved Direct Hiring Authority for pipeline safety positions that qualify as science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) positions.
- Improved succession planning for pipeline engineers. PHMSA will continue to use and enhance its Basic, Intermediate, and Advance Leadership Development Program. This program can help develop the competencies needed for individuals to excel in leadership positions and contribute to retention efforts by providing career growth opportunities and enhancing job satisfaction.
- The request for a special pay table to offer special pay rates for positions in all PHMSA regions was approved. As a result, PHMSA Special Rate Table has been created, effective the first day of the pay period beginning on or after May 7, 2023. This measure aims to improve competitiveness and attract and retain qualified candidates in the 0800 Engineering series. Additionally, PHMSA continued to offer student loan repayment, tuition assistance, and retention incentives with continued service agreements.

PHMSA's hiring plan in FY 2023 was created by a comprehensive workforce planning effort in 2021 that evaluated the current workforce strategically to determine future hiring and placement

needs and other human capital initiatives, such as PHMSA hiring strategies and stay interviews over the subsequent three years. Ultimately, these strategies will help PHMSA build a strong and resilient workforce. The current workforce plan will be updated in FY24.