November 10, 2022

Michael Drake, President
University of California
Office of the President
1111 Franklin Street
Oakland, CA 94607

Dear President Drake,

As the Chair of the Assembly Committee on Transportation, I write to urge you to reach agreement with your UAW-represented employees on their climate-friendly transit proposals to create a more sustainable California.

Given the University of California’s (UC) position as the state’s largest employer, you have an opportunity to lead on the fight against the climate crisis right now. The UC’s 48,000 academic workers alone generate over 1,000,000 vehicle miles through their commutes each week. This number does not include the 100,000+ non-UAW staff and the 200,000+ UC undergraduates. UAW workers are fighting for contracts that reduce these emissions and tackle climate change.

California has set ambitious goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and I have been working to ensure that our transportation funding aligns with those goals. Without investment from our public institutions, the climate emergency will only worsen. Currently, the high cost of housing forces academic workers to live far from their workplaces. Meanwhile, workers who choose sustainable commuting options do so at additional personal cost, which can be a barrier to these practices being adopted consistently and widely.

48,000 postdocs, academic researchers and graduate student workers have proposed that UC provide cash incentives to commute via sustainable means, free public transit passes, and subsidies for bike maintenance and e-bikes. These proposals will lessen California’s climate impacts, help UC become a truly sustainable institution, and spur public transit ridership and investment, enhancing the quality of public transit for all Californians.

UAW-represented academic workers power the UC’s research and education missions and are a major reason why the UC system received over $3.5 billion in federal research contracts and grant revenue in fiscal year 2021. I urge you to create a more sustainable UC for these workers, while helping to stem the climate crisis for us all.
I look forward to an opportunity to partner with you and the entire UC system to advance our common goals and position California as a world leader in sustainability. Should you or your staff have any questions, please contact my office at (916) 319-2043.

Sincerely,

LAURA FRIEDMAN
Assemblymember, 43rd District