April 28, 2022

The Honorable Chuck Schumer   The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader   Minority Leader
United States Senate   United States Senate

Re: Support for Periodically Listing Updates to Management Act (The PLUM Act, S.3650)

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McConnell:

On behalf of the undersigned bipartisan group of civil society organizations, we write to urge passage of the Periodically Listing Updates to Management Act (PLUM Act, S.3650), which would increase transparency and oversight of the most senior leaders of the Executive Branch. The Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee voted to favorably report the bipartisan legislation on March 30, 2022.

The publication *United States Government Policy and Supporting Positions*, commonly called the *Plum Book*, is a congressional document published every four years that lists more than 9,000 political appointees.[1] It contains information on senior federal civil servants in the legislative and executive branches that may be subject to noncompetitive appointment (e.g., agency heads and policy advisors). In other words, it contains positions that often have a close and confidential relationship with the agency head or other key officials — plum positions.

Appointments and vacancy information contained in the Plum Book rapidly go out of date as a consequence of the report's infrequent publication. As amended, the PLUM Act would modernize the Plum Book and annually publish online an updated directory of senior government leaders. It requires the Director of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management "to establish and maintain a public directory of the individuals occupying Government policy and supporting positions." Publication of the physical book would sunset after a few years. The PLUM Act would resolve an important issue raised by the Government Accountability Office, which noted in a March 2019 report that "there is no single source of data on political appointees serving in the executive branch that is publicly available, comprehensive, and timely."[2] It would address GAO's conclusion that such a source of "information would facilitate congressional oversight and hold leaders accountable."

An online PLUM book would facilitate independent review and analysis related to office vacancies and appointments. Publication may also increase visibility for these job opportunities and encourage a wider pool of diverse candidates to pursue these positions. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further. Please contact Daniel Schuman, Policy Director for Demand Progress at Daniel@DemandProgress.org or 240-237-3930, or Mark Hanis of Inclusive America at Mark@InclusiveAmerica.org.

Sincerely,

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[1] See "United States Government Policy and Supporting Positions" (2016) https://bookstore.gpo.gov/products/united-states-government-policy-and-supporting-positions-december-1-2016-plum-book-0.

[2] "Government-wide Political Appointee Data and Some Ethics Oversight Procedures at Interior and SBA Could Be Improved," Government Accountability Office, Report 19-249 (March 2019), https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/697593.pdf.

Advocacy Blueprints
American Oversight
Americans for Prosperity
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)
Demand Progress
Digital Democracy Project
Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC)
FAA Managers Association
Federal Managers Association (FMA)
Fix Democracy First
Government Information Watch
Inclusive America
National Freedom of Information Coalition
National Taxpayers Union
New Progressive Alliance
Open The Government
OpenSecrets
Professional Managers Association
Project On Government Oversight (POGO)
Protect Democracy
R Street Institute
Senior Executives Association (SEA)

Kevin R. Kosar, American Enterprise Institute
Zach Graves, Lincoln Network
Marilyn Elaine Stachenfeld
Kevin M. Esterling, Ph.D., University of California, Riverside
Lorelei Kelly, Beeck Center for Social Impact and Innovation

cc: The Honorable Tom Carper
        The Honorable Gary Peters
        The Honorable Rob Portman