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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,  
AND TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125

WEBSITE: <https://commerce.senate.gov>

May 18, 2022

The Honorable Lina Khan  
Chair  
Federal Trade Commission  
600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20580

Dear Chair Khan:

Last month, the Office of Personnel Management published the results of its annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS), which details the current work environment for federal employees. I am deeply troubled by the Federal Trade Commission's (FTC or Commission) performance in this survey. Although FTC employees have historically expressed high levels of satisfaction with their work environment, after less than one year under your leadership FTC employees' overall satisfaction with the agency has declined precipitously.<sup>1</sup> I write today to ask that you explain why staff perception and regard for the Commission's leadership has decreased and to provide a plan for how you are going to work with all Commissioners to address this breakdown in confidence within the agency.

The results of the FEVS indicate that the FTC's senior leaders have lost the trust of a significant portion of FTC staff. Of the more than 500 FTC employees surveyed, 29% disagreed with the statement that the FTC's senior leaders maintain high standards of honesty and integrity. Additionally, 35% of respondents shared that they do not have a high level of respect for the FTC's senior leadership.<sup>2</sup>

These results are striking on their own, but are more alarming in context. A larger proportion of FTC employees did not have a high level of respect for senior leadership and did not believe senior leaders were honest than in any of the other 34 federal agencies that were included in FEVS.<sup>3</sup> This is a complete reversal from the prior year, where FTC employees' respect and estimation of senior leadership's honesty and integrity were the highest of any agency surveyed.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See: Office of Personnel Management, *2020 Office of Personnel Management Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey: Report by Agency* (Apr. 26, 2021): FTC: Question 38, 89% Satisfied or Very Satisfied. And: Office of Personnel Management, *2021 Office of Personnel Management Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey: Report by Agency* (Apr. 28, 2022): FTC: Question 44, 60% Satisfied or Very Satisfied.

<sup>2</sup> Office of Personnel Management, *2021 Office of Personnel Management Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey: Report by Agency* (Apr. 28, 2022).

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> See: Office of Personnel Management, *2020 Office of Personnel Management Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey: Report by Agency* (Apr. 26, 2021): FTC: Question 27, 4% Disagree or Strongly Disagree; Question 31, 6% Disagree or Strongly Disagree.

This problem demands immediate attention. If the current level of staff satisfaction persists, turnover at the agency will undoubtedly increase and consumers will ultimately pay the price. The loss of talented lawyers and economists would hamper the FTC's ability to effectively fulfill its mission to promote competition and protect consumers.

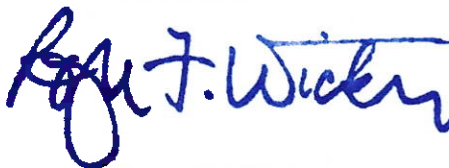
As Ranking Member of the Senate committee with oversight jurisdiction over the FTC, I request that you provide information regarding any factors contributing to the reported decrease in overall satisfaction with the agency and trust in senior leadership and how the issues raised in the FEVS will be addressed going forward. In particular, I request answers to the following questions:

- 1) What factors or decisions by Commission senior leadership contributed to the decrease in overall satisfaction of agency staff?
- 2) What changes were made in the past year to internal FTC practices, policies, or procedures that could have led staff to question the honesty and integrity of senior leadership?
- 3) What changes to internal FTC practices, policies, or procedures have you implemented or do you plan to implement to regain the trust of agency staff?
- 4) How can senior leadership learn from FTC employees in management positions who consistently receive excellent evaluations, and whose job approval ratings increased this year?<sup>5</sup>
- 5) What steps will you take to ensure that talented staff do not leave the agency because of dissatisfaction with senior leadership?

Please provide your responses as soon as possible, but not later than June 8, 2022. In addition, I request that you share quarterly staff turnover rates with my committee staff beginning with the first quarter of fiscal year 2016 to the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2021. Please continue to provide these updates to the committee on a quarterly basis.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter. If you have any questions, please contact Matthew Hamilton with the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation minority staff at (202) 224-1251.

Sincerely,



Roger F. Wicker  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Committee on  
Commerce, Science, and Transportation

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<sup>5</sup> Office of Personnel Management, *2021 Office of Personnel Management Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey: Report by Agency* (Apr. 28, 2022).