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Good morning Chairman Ryan, Ranking Member Herrera Beutler, and Members of the Legislative Branch Subcommittee. It is an honor to testify before this distinguished panel, and I thank you for the opportunity to discuss issues of great importance to the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and the House of Representatives.

I also want to thank you and all of the members of this Subcommittee for the unwavering support provided to the Wellness Center since its inception three years ago. As you all know, at the direction of this Subcommittee, the CAO worked closely with key stakeholders, including the House Sergeant at Arms, Clerk of the House, U.S. Capitol Police, Architect of the Capitol, and Attending Physician to establish the House Wellness Center, launching in October of 2018.

Organizationally, the Wellness Center is located within the CAO’s Office of Employee Assistance (OEA). This alignment allows the Wellness Center to work in seamlessly with the entire OEA staff on a host of well-being offerings that complement and enhance OEA’s services.

Over the last 28 months, the House Wellness Center has grown into a holistic well-being program for the entire House community. We provide tools, services, and a support system to educate, motivate, and empower employees in Member, Committee, and Leadership offices, all House Officer organizations, as well as the U.S. Capitol Police, Architect of the Capitol, and the Congressional Budget Office.

Our programs and resources are offered on a variety of platforms ensuring every employee has the same level of access and care intended to positively impact individual and organizational well-being, productivity, and workplace culture.

The House Wellness Center’s multi-dimensional approach to employee well-being, emphasizes six important areas, including:

- Physical – improving health outcomes through favorable lifestyle choices
- Emotional – fostering confidence and building resiliency
- Financial – a sense of monetary freedom and security
- Social – having quality relationships with family, friends, and colleagues
- Community – connecting with your neighborhood and environment
- Career – a feeling of purpose in the workplace

Overall well-being is not about sacrificing success in one area for another, but rather, finding harmony amongst all six dimensions. While this mindset is an important element of all wellness programs, the events of the past year have underscored the need for our holistic approach.

Therefore, it has been critical during the COVID-19 pandemic, that the House Wellness Center create new, and promote existing, resources and services to support employees during this unprecedented time in our nation's history.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, the House Wellness Center has created 15 infographics and offered 50 webinars with close to 1,000 viewers on a variety of relevant topics across all the dimensions of well-being, including stress management, nutrition, and physical activity. Through these efforts, we increased the promotion of our stress management and resilience-building application to help employees understand the root cause of daily stressors and provide access to online tools such as mindfulness, relaxation techniques, meditation, and yoga.

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the House Wellness Center had just recently launched two nutrition solutions to help employees improve their diets and eat healthy anywhere, anytime. One solution helps employees create healthy menus, choose healthy options at restaurants, as well as order groceries and meal kits delivered safely right to their door. The other, helps employees assess their current diet type and quality, identify nutritional gaps, and provides actionable steps to help employees achieve their ideal diet. This is all done in a matter of minutes, without the arduous task of logging food and tracking calories.

The House Wellness Center also introduced a six-part monthly mindfulness webinar series early in 2020, alongside a stand-alone mindfulness application with a workplace emphasis to help employees establish a daily mindfulness practice. The above resources are offered in partnership with our parent office, the OEA, who are the mental health and emotional well-being experts of the House community.

The House Wellness Center worked closely with the House Staff Fitness Center to promote their mobile application, a free resource to the House community that provides daily workouts, fitness tips, and blogs. A 12-week well-being program was created and launched to help employees increase physical activity and mental acuity, and the House Wellness Center also ran various well-being challenges for Member and House Officer offices to improve employee camaraderie and engagement, while promoting healthy behaviors.

We created a COVID-19 Toolkit webpage with a curated list of available tools and services, updated regularly to keep employees informed and equipped with the latest wellness resources.

The House Wellness Center hosted a month-long virtual well-being fair in June 2020, highlighting different dimensions of well-being each week with activities such as morning mindfulness sessions, mid-day workouts, and interactive demonstrations promoted as family-friendly offerings.

To offer additional support for employees, the House Wellness Center launched a wellness coaching platform, offering one-on-one lifestyle and behavioral change guidance. The wellness coaches work closely with the employees to identify positive action strategies, turning risk factors into strengths, and obstacles into growth opportunities. The in-house coaches have completed more than 100 sessions to date and interest continues to grow in the wellness coaching platform.

Considering the environment caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the increased stress and demand placed on employees, the House Wellness Center added significant enhancements to the current agreement with their work-life services provider, including emergency backup child and elder care, as well as an online academic resource center and educational tutoring services.

These services are in addition to the personalized guidance employees can receive in areas such as child care and parenting, senior care and caregiving, legal assistance, financial guidance, house and home needs, as well as discounts on everything from movie tickets to technology, life event kits to tackle life's emergencies and milestones, and other additional resources.

Our vendor is the largest work-life services provider to the federal government, covering roughly 50% of the entire civilian workforce, and at the time of this hearing, the House of Representatives is the only agency that offers both the Backup Care Connection and Homework Connection enhancements, a testament to the goal of being an agency and employer of choice.

During this past Health Benefits Open Season, the House Wellness Center launched a benefits plan transparency and comparison tool to help improve health literacy, so employees can make the most informed decisions when it comes to their healthcare. Among other things, this tool provides total out-of-pocket costs for each plan, including premiums, copays, coinsurance, and deductibles, which according to the latest OPM Federal Employee Survey, is the most important factor employees consider when selecting a health plan. For the 2021 plan enrollment season, close to 1,000 unique users accessed the tool nearly 1,200 times.

Even though we have been in a telework posture for close to a year, the House Wellness Center continues to work closely with the CAO Communications and Marketing team to promote its resources and services. At the close of 2020, the House Wellness Center mobile and web-based applications had nearly 2,000 registered user accounts and the House Wellness Center website was viewed over 24,000 times.

Also, I am excited to mention that the renovation of the new House Wellness Center storefront, in Longworth House Office Building B222, is nearing completion and will provide a welcoming location for employees to visit, relax and re-energize, speak with a staff member, and learn about the resources and services that are available. This strategic location will help create greater employee awareness and engagement of the House Wellness Center.

The turbulent times caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have recently been compounded and magnified by the tragedy of the January 6, 2021 U.S. Capitol violence. With the strategic placement of the House Wellness Center under the OEA, the House Wellness Center has been providing administrative support and resource awareness on behalf of the OEA while they valiantly manage the critical incident response, mental health, and emotional well-being of the House community.

The House Wellness Center is working closely with the OEA to identify additional opportunities and resources to support employees during these extraordinary and unprecedented times. The unfortunate reality is that while the House community continues to deal with the aftermath of the violence, the other stressors caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and life obligations in general, do not go away. It remains the responsibility of the House Wellness Center to provide day-to-day well-being support for the House community to help them achieve work-life harmony and improved quality of life.

In 2021, the House Wellness Center will continue its work to identify population health disparities, increase outreach and awareness efforts with initiatives such as a Wellness Champion network, conduct focus groups, and work closely with key stakeholders to better understand House community well-being needs. The House Wellness Center will begin offering regular House community-wide health enhancement programs, population-specific programs, and partner with its vendors and business partners on improving health outcomes through education, engagement, and empowerment.

The House Wellness Center will continue to benchmark its resources and services against other Federal wellness programs while staying up-to-date on industry trends and best practices. These efforts and those detailed further above, coupled with leadership's commitment to employee well-being and positive culture change, will help the House of Representatives remain an agency and employer of choice.

Again, I thank the Subcommittee for the opportunity to testify on this important topic and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

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