

April 28, 2021

**Sent via US Mail and E-mail: [Amy.Stratton@mail.house.gov](mailto:Amy.Stratton@mail.house.gov)**

Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney  
Committee on Oversight and Reform  
2157 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Maloney:

I am president of Independent Women's Forum ("IWF"), and am submitting this letter in response to your April 22, 2021 letter directed to Patrice Onwuka, the director of IWF's Center for Economic Opportunity who testified at the hearing your Committee held on March 24, 2021. As IWF's subject area expert, Patrice was the perfect witness to address the substantive topics of the hearing. Should you or any members of the Committee have specific follow-up questions on the substance of her testimony, Patrice would be happy to respond.

The questions for the record submitted by Representative Speier, have nothing to do with the substantive work Patrice does on behalf of hard-working women. While providing important insights and experience to the Committee, during that hearing, Patrice was asked about IWF's sources of funding. As a subject-matter expert on women's economic issues, fundraising is not in Patrice's portfolio. She appropriately responded that this was not her role at the organization, that she did not know our largest supporters, and suggested that I would be better suited to respond to such questions. Notably, she was the only witness to be asked such questions, and it appears that those questions and your follow-up letter are a not-too-subtle attempt to intimidate IWF, its staff, and its supporters.

Had Representative Speier looked on our website, she would have seen that Independent Women's Forum abides by a Code of Ethics designed to separate funding from our substantive policy work. All employees know about this policy and are instructed to follow it as a condition of employment. Simply put, that policy makes clear that IWF is independent not only politically but also from our donors. As such, policy-oriented staff, like Patrice, remain focused on issues, not sources of funding.

The questions we received were offensive in many ways. They suggest that just because Patrice attended IWF's Annual Awards Gala in years past, she should know who IWF's largest donors are. The entire premise of that question is flawed. IWF acknowledges a handful of specific gala supporters, but those supporters are not necessarily the largest donors. Indeed, gala sponsors are typically fairly modest donors; perusing our dinner programs is a very inaccurate method of assessing from whom we receive substantial support.

Independent Women's Forum is proud to receive support from a variety of foundations, individuals of all income levels, and from a few corporations. The vast majority of our donors--89%--are small, individual donors (under \$5,000). They support Independent Women's Forum because they share our desire to create a stronger, freer country, with better opportunities for all Americans

Patrice Onwuka's Center for Economic Opportunity exemplifies this kind of work and the reason why people choose to support us financially. Patrice's Center is dedicated to identifying and highlighting policies that enable Americans--and particularly women--to have the opportunity to find employment and pursue their own visions of happiness. Specifically, IWF's Center for Economic Opportunity focuses on promoting flexible work opportunities, eliminating barriers to work (such as harmful occupational licensing regimes), encouraging entrepreneurship and improving safety net programs to target aid at those in need, while encouraging long term independence and flourishing. I'm tremendously proud of Patrice's work on behalf of American women.

IWF works hard to promote policies that will help women to succeed—not the same tired and trite policies that sound good—but policies that actually work. Diverse viewpoints will help to drive policy and help women to succeed. These bullying tactics appear to be nothing more than an attempt to keep Patrice and IWF on the sidelines of a meaningful policy discussion.

Sincerely,



Carrie Lukas  
President

