

Written Statement of

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Efficiency and competitiveness on the world stage are priorities we hear about frequently in hearings like this one. I'd like to highlight a key aspect of this body in dire need of modernization: proxy voting. We are a more diverse body than we've ever been, with people of various backgrounds, parental statuses and family responsibilities, and we have the opportunity to boldly embrace change, and look at new avenues to make this body more representative and more participatory. We can make sure no one is left without a voice in these halls. That's why I firmly support proxy voting, especially for new parents in Congress, and why I'm a proud co-sponsor of H.Res. 23, the Proxy Voting for New Parents Resolution.

More than 80 percent of House members are parents and I am certain we all share a deep love and commitment to our family lives and children. I hear my colleagues talk about "family values" and strengthening American families—making room for families within our own House rules is a perfect way to show that we are a family-friendly body with policies that help parents carry out this important work. Even members without young children can understand the burden on our work that caring for a sick parent or dealing with a personal health crisis represents, and just how much it would mean to have flexibility in these moments. Our nation is far behind its peers and potential when we think about parental and family leave. We must reckon with the real barriers we put up to a healthy family life, and do more to give new parents flexibility and grace.

The idea that voting by proxy is somehow neglecting one's duties or constitutional responsibilities is absurd. Assertions that any of our colleagues with a new child or finding themselves in the hospital are merely "lazy" or "uncommitted" ignore the realities of parenting or caring for a sick loved one, and the realities of being a member of the House. Our work and commitment to our constituents is too important to leave any vote at the mercy of personal emergencies. Proxy voting ensures that our nation's business can carry on even when circumstances keep a member from joining us physically.

Beyond proxy voting, I want to ensure members have and make use of the appropriate resources to keep themselves, their families, and their staff safe, especially in-district where member security resources are more limited. Too many members have experienced personally the danger and vitriol brought on by growing domestic extremism and while we do face threats in our D.C. workplaces, we also know that similar threats exist back home, often in situations without the comprehensive services and protections offered by USCP here in Washington.

Whether attending town halls, community meetings, or other events in-district, a member's focus should be on connecting with constituents, not worrying about their own safety and wellbeing. I

know my colleagues appreciate how fundamental these interactions are to fostering democratic engagement and ensuring that the voices of their constituents are heard, but with growing exposure at district events and heightened tensions in our political climate comes greater potential for targeted acts of violence, intimidation, and harassment. I've spoken with too many colleagues that have stories of a time when their safety and lives were threatened, and they didn't have the resources to manage that threat, or didn't know where to go to find them. I have seen firsthand that many local leaders have better security resources at home than do members of this body. Investing in these safety and security resources for members of Congress helps allow us all to serve our communities and the public more successfully, and takes a step forward in our broader work of protecting the work of public servants.

Our mandate is to give a voice to the people, to uphold democracy, and to create efficient and effective government processes, no matter the circumstances. Our rules must continue to be a reflection of these principles—and be backed up with the appropriate resources. I thank the committee for this opportunity to share my thoughts on these important issues.