

## **Testimony of Congressman Larry Bucshon, M.D. (IN-08)**

Chair Butterfield and Ranking Member Steil, thank you for allowing me to speak at today's member day hearing on COVID-19 safety protocols in place for the Capitol complex and, specifically, the office of the Attending Physician (OAP).

As a Doctor, it appalls me to think Doctors are put in a position to have to answer to political pressures, rather than set forth guidance based on facts and medical expertise.

From my perspective, this has happened time and time again throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and in the safety protocol decision making process here in the House of Representatives. I believe this has offered us an opportunity for this committee to reexamine the role of the Office of the Attending Physician and de-politicize the office, removing it from the partisan overreach of the Office of the Speaker – regardless of which political party happens to be in the majority.

The Office of Attending Physician was established to be the Doctor on campus and attend to basic medical needs—not set protocols to respond to a national pandemic. The office is in need of modernization to reflect the times.

This is why earlier this year I introduced H.R. 4862, the Office of Attending Physician Independence Act, which would remove the ability for political pressure to put upon the Office of Attending Physician by establishing a bicameral, bipartisan framework, much like that of the Architect of the Capitol that has been in place since 1990, to appoint and oversee the Office of Attending Physician.

Rather than a lifetime appointment, the bill would make the Office of the Attending Physician position a 10-year term with the opportunity to be reappointed and establish proper congressional committee oversight of the office.

Since COVID-19 is going to be endemic in our society, I call on this committee to consider H.R. 4862 and move the bill through the committee process so that we can equip Congress with the tools it needs to respond to a pandemic and set proper safety protocols so that members and the American public can be assured that any guidelines are based on science, rather than potentially as the result of political pressure applied by the majority party.

With approved vaccines now readily available for almost anyone in our society who wants one, as well as therapeutic treatments and almost two years of clinical experience to treat patients with COVID-19, there is no reason why we can't, and why we shouldn't, have guidelines in place to safely reopen the people's house and get back to doing the American people's business in an open and transparent manner. But sadly, politics is winning over reason and science.

In closing, public health decisions must be made based on sound science and medical expertise. It is time to end the partisan, quasi-oversight rule of the Speaker when it comes to Congress'

public health decisions and we must reform and modernize the Office of the Attending Physician so that we can get back to effectively doing the people's work.

Thank you, and I yield back.