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Post-Hearing Question for the Record Submitted to Mr. James-Christian Blockwood from the House Committee on Administration Subcommittee on Modernization

“Legislative Branch Advancement: GAO Modernization”

Question: In your testimony, you discuss multiple areas for improvement and strengthening GAO. In your view, what statutory revisions or updates would benefit GAO and Congress?

Answer: Thank you for the opportunity to provide additional information on the statutory updates that would benefit the Government Accountability Office (GAO) or Congress. In my written testimony I noted that GAO already has well-established statutory authority that provides it with broad access to agencies to conduct its audits and evaluations. While these authorities underpin GAO’s work, it is the practices around the authorities that may need additional consideration and adjustment. Areas for further exploration include:

- **Provide GAO with the authority to synthesize and curate recommendations from across the accountability community.** This includes not only the Congressional Research Service (CRS) and Congressional Budget Office (CBO), but also could include findings from executive branch inspectors general (IG). GAO routinely coordinates with IGs in agencies. However, to ensure better coordination and avoid duplication, this could be advanced with the goal of formally identifying trends and practices noted across, not just within, agencies. This would provide Congress, and agencies, the ability to take an enterprise view to findings and remedies, especially on issues that are cross-cutting, such as human capital. While this may not require a statutory change, if necessary, it could be considered for placement in 31 U.S.C. § 717.
- **Strengthen incentives/penalties for agencies not ensuring timely recommendation follow up or fully furnishing data necessary for an audit.** While current statute (31 U.S.C. § 716) provides GAO some remedies for ensuring agency compliance with audits and evaluations, the nature of these remedies may make it less likely that GAO can ensure, in a timely manner, data access and recommendation closeout. While GAO already reports to Congress as needed on any access issues, it may be helpful to consider additional ways to ensure Congress continues to receive these reports and to formalize how this information is captured and what actions can be taken. One option may be further providing a range of penalties beyond what’s already in statute to give GAO additional tools to ensure that it gets the information it needs for audits and evaluations, and that the work it does identifying areas of focus are remedied.
- **Enable a robust customer experience (CX) function within GAO.** To identify the practices, skills, and authorities (statutory or otherwise) that GAO might need to achieve this, this subcommittee might consider how other agencies are building CX functions through dedicated delivery teams, designated CX senior officials, and governance structures. Additionally, there are several

bipartisan bills already introduced in Congress that might be instructive to this consideration. S. 2866 and H.R. 5887 are two examples of recently introduced CX legislation and we expect more to be introduced in the future. These bills start a more robust conversation about the needs of agencies and how best to start embedding CX at an agency and enterprise level. GAO is already a model agency in many ways and robust CX would allow it to continue to meet Congress' and the public's needs.

- **Strengthen GAO's orientation efforts for Congress and newly appointed executive branch leaders.** GAO already has practices in place to reach out to new Cabinet officials following a Presidential transition to introduce its role and share open recommendations. Across administrations, there is continuous turnover among senior political appointees and a constant need to ensure they are aware of the critical role that GAO provides, its statutory authority to collect information, best practices and responsibilities of agencies in working effectively with GAO, and recommendations to address areas raised in audits and evaluations, particularly from the High Risk List. This reimagining of orientation to GAO's work likely does not need statutory changes, however it requires potential changes to how the current statute is implemented. GAO should continue its efforts to meet with agency secretaries and deputy secretaries to discuss priorities and data sharing, especially for cross-cutting issues such as the High Risk List. GAO might also consider more regular interaction with the chief officer councils (e.g., CFO Council, CIO Council) to engage them on enterprise data sharing, best practices and closing out recommendations from GAO. GAO could also use these outreach opportunities to highlight GAO's Open Recommendations database and reporting requirements on closing out recommendations.

This Subcommittee might also consider ways to ensure agencies meet their statutory obligation to provide GAO with data and access (and what types of data that means). This may be beneficial in helping GAO push forward on its efforts to encourage agencies to close out open recommendations.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, provide additional context and continue working with you on modernizing legislative branch agencies. I look forward to additional discussion and would also like to offer up our teams at the Partnership for Public Service to provide the Subcommittee with additional conversations, resources and/or briefings. These could include our [Best Places to Work in the Federal Government](#) data, employee engagement trends and best practices, and a deeper dive into customer experience practice and policy options.