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Office of the Chief Administrative Officer
House Committee on Appropriations – Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch
“House Officer’s Hearing FY22 Budget”
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Good Morning, Chairwoman DeLauro, Ranking Member Granger, and Members of the Committee. It is an honor to testify before this distinguished panel. I would like to express my appreciation for the Subcommittee’s support for and allocation of resources to a bipartisan office focused on creating a more inclusive and effective Congress by recruiting, training, and supporting a diverse Congressional workforce. I thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on issues that are important to the Office of Diversity & Inclusion, as we continue to work in service to the House of Representatives.

Since my appointment in March of 2020, I have served the newly established House Office of Diversity & Inclusion as its Executive Director. Since the House office was established, we have worked to advance diversity and inclusion as core values across the House. In our inaugural year, the House Office of Diversity & Inclusion has drafted and submitted a Diversity Plan and Operations Plan for the House of Representatives. These plans include Mission, Vision, and Impact statements and were designed to serve as a roadmap for the House as it works to recognize, embrace, and leverage the core principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Using the funding allocated to our Office, we have hired a full staff of seven and a half employees, and they have worked tirelessly to establish operating procedures, participate in professional development, create employee candidate development and vetting practices, and host informational and educational programming for the House community. We developed and implemented a House-wide survey to evaluate diversity in House employing offices and developed policies to direct and guide these offices on how to recruit, hire, train, advance, promote, and retain a diverse workforce.

I respectfully ask for your consideration and support of the following recommendations that can be implemented in 2022.

The Office of Diversity & Inclusion has been tasked with separate and distinct reporting requirements.

1. The first requirement we are tasked with is conducting a survey to assess the diversity of the House workforce. The first Compensation and Diversity Survey, conducted in 2019, reviewed the demographic makeup, salaries, and benefits of all House employees and compared it against Executive Branch and private sector counterparts. The evaluation looked at and compared salary and benefit levels, compensation disparities across key demographics (race, gender, experience level, etc.), and House-wide policy for medical leave for employees, as well as a possible tuition assistance program.

Additionally, the Office of Diversity & Inclusion conducted a barrier analysis to assist the House in identifying barriers to equitable employment. The purpose of a barrier analysis is to identify whether there are pay and opportunity disparities across key demographics and to determine the barriers to eliminating those disparities. The analysis evaluated anonymized input from

House personnel for recommendations on how to improve retention and increase equity in staff opportunities. This data collection, in concert with the Compensation and Diversity Survey, will enable the House Office of Diversity & Inclusion to develop, establish, and continually refine strategic goals and remedy policies, procedures, and practices to alleviate barriers to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the House.

2. In addition, the Office of Diversity & Inclusion was recently tasked with Witness Diversity Reporting. The pilot initiative was originally launched in January 2020 by the Tri-Caucus, made up of the Congressional Black Caucus, Congressional Hispanic Caucus, and the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, to track the diversity of expert discretionary witnesses who testified before Congress. The Witness Diversity Initiative was created to ensure that a diversity of voices and perspectives are considered by all Committees to ensure inclusive policies and legislation that benefit the entire country. Information about witnesses was collected through an optional survey shared along with the required Truth in Testimony Disclosure Form to outside witnesses. We are in the process of assessing the previous initiative and recommending an implementation plan and guide. The enhancement of this survey and providing a yearly report on the data collected will require additional office staff to support the effort.
3. Finally, the Office of the Diversity & Inclusion is tasked with tracking diversity among interns. Congressional internships are often prerequisites to full-time staff positions. The Office of Diversity & Inclusion will examine and administer regular studies of demographic and pay information for interns and provide a report.

Data and analysis derived from these efforts will assist the House Office of Diversity & Inclusion in identifying strengths and potential areas of growth as well as refining and prioritizing strategic goals and understanding changes to workforce composition to inform long-term retention and recruitment strategy for a diverse and talented workforce. Currently, our office partners with independent private businesses to conduct the complex surveys and complete reports. With additional resources, we could employ a team of research analysts to collect data, analyze, and report information on our own workforce and committee witnesses as required. Also, if we utilized interactive data visualization software, we could provide reports in an electronic format. Reporting in this manner would allow individuals to select, refine, and compare available data sets. To create the electronic reports, we will need to purchase the necessary software and technology.

Of the FY 2021 requested amount, we also request that an annual budget of \$250,000 be added to the House Office of Diversity & Inclusion, designated for a community engagement strategy. This funding would cover, but is not limited to, providing travel funds and support for the House Office of Diversity & Inclusion to visit relevant educational departments and to educate college students on opportunities for a career in public service.

Based on these responsibilities and accomplishments, our office will need more support from the House in order to continue the work we do. We are so grateful for your kind consideration to ensure that the Office of Diversity & Inclusion can continue to be a professional resource for the House community. I thank you all for your consideration and look forward to answering any questions you may have.