

***Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Request  
Testimony of Catherine L. Szpindor  
Chief Administrative Officer***

Thank you, Chairman Amodei, Ranking Member Espaillat, and members of the Subcommittee. I appreciate the opportunity to present the Fiscal Year 2024 priorities and subsequent budget request of \$227.9 million, which is \$16.3 million, or approximately 7.7% above the Fiscal Year 2023 Enacted Budget, for the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO).

The CAO is guided by our motto: Member focused, service driven. This focus on Member service is more than a motto for our work, it's a guidepost for decisions about strategic investments to help the House become a more modern, transparent, and efficient institution.

Though broad in scope, every CAO service and product supports and protects House Members. All decisions related to the services and products provided and subsequent funding requests are made with input and approval from our oversight entities and stakeholders.

\$2.5 million of our requested increase will allow us to fully fund existing personnel, recruitment efforts, and estimated cost of living adjustments. No additional funding is being requested for longevities and over time, as they will be absorbed into the personnel base.

Our requested non-personnel increase includes a \$7.9 million increase for House Information Resources, which will support the enhancement of House cloud security and support the House's enterprise licenses for current software, such as Microsoft Office 365, teleconferencing solutions such as Zoom and Webex, and associated licensing for PCs, laptops, etc. to support the products.

\$2.8 million of our requested increase will support the highly successful CAO Coach Program with additional consultants to assist in content development for professional development for on-site and remote training. Additionally, this requested increase will fund previously underfunded House Creative Services contractors, who provide popular multimedia, design, and photography services for all Members, Committees, and Leadership offices.

\$1.2 million of our requested increase for House Recording Studio will support two audiovisual contractors and the seven-year lifecycle replacement plan of House Recording Studio equipment. In addition, \$1.1 million of our requested increase will support increases for existing Logistics and Support contractors, the costs associated with exercising the first option year of the Logistics and Support warehouse contract, and the supplies and material costs associated with the Member Furniture Program's seven-year lifecycle replacement plan for House owned furniture.

Finally, \$750,000 of our requested increase will help us strengthen CAO operational support and services, which includes the sustainment of the House mail contract, the Human Resources Hub, and the House Resume Bank.

When we have adequate funding, the CAO is able to undertake a number of high-level projects on behalf of Members and staff. For example, the CAO is currently modernizing HouseNet, the House Intranet, to make that platform a significantly improved hub for all administrative services

in the House. As part of that project, we will migrate HouseNet from an on-premises hosting platform to a dedicated intranet platform hosted in the cloud. With this new platform comes a host of new capabilities, including improved search, user personalized content, and a more mobile-friendly and application-based version to improve access. I expect the new HouseNet to launch later this year, and we plan additional improvements in subsequent years to better integrate administrative systems and services into one platform.

Beginning in 2023, the CAO will begin the process of modernizing our payroll and human resource systems. The current system is hosted in CAO data centers and is near its end of life and we are beginning the process to find a replacement. This will be a multiple-year project, and depending on funding, we could launch the replacement system sometime in 2026. As part of this initiative, the CAO will thoroughly examine the House's payroll processes with an eye toward automating procedures that are currently manual and more closely aligned with practices in both the executive branch and the private sector. We will also look more deeply at the House pay cycle as part of this project, which is currently monthly for both Member and staff pay. We know there is interest in moving to a more frequent pay cycle, so understanding the implications of changing the pay cycle is something we will examine this year.

Finally, on the modernization front, the CAO is working with the Modernization Subcommittee on a project to provide improved e-discovery tools to oversight and investigative Committees throughout the House. The long-term goal of this project is to select a single e-discovery platform for all Committees that the House can successfully manage, train investigators to use, and leverage to expand the House's institutional oversight capacity. I plan to request funds from the Modernization Account for this initiative in both FY 2023 and FY 2024 while we mature this capability, and depending on the funding models selected, funds will be requested in FY 2025 for an enterprise e-discovery tool.

Our CAO teams have encountered many challenges over the past year. Without question, one of our biggest challenges was the 118<sup>th</sup> Transition. Faced with the reality of supporting a transition post reapportionment and redistricting – the first time in a decade – our CAO teams worked diligently with the funds allocated to support a transition that met the individual needs of Members and their staff.

We began planning by undertaking an institution-wide audit to identify all actions needed to fully support impacted Member offices. Using innovative tools, like geo-mapping technology, our CAO Transition Team was able to forecast the exact technological and geographical impact of redistricting and prepare our D.C. and district office service providers.

Rather than taking the one-size-fits-all approach to House office furniture, our CAO Logistics Team used their transition funds to improve service and offer more furniture options that met Member's individual needs. Further, once Members-elect arrived on campus, we were able to use these transition funds to add an additional 112 offices to the TV Program. We now have 308 offices enrolled. We were also able to provide a larger technology stipend to Members so they could have the technology they needed to start serving their constituents as quickly as possible.

At the request of the Committee on House Administration, and with the support of transition funding, CAO Coaches and CAO Customer Advocates played a significant role in supporting the two-week New Member Orientation program overseen by the Committee on House Administration. Transition funding supported the development of an orientation program that is responsive to Members-Elects' needs so they can understand the House as an institution and serve their constituents.

Further, with the additional funds requested in FY 2023, the Coaches and Advocates are supporting Member office operations through a newly developed New Staff Orientation program. Now all new staff are being provided with the comprehensive resources and information they need to fully support their Member's office.

Additionally, the CAO is committed to implementing the modernization recommendations that will allow us to make the People's House a more modern, transparent, and efficient institution. The CAO will continue to partner with this Subcommittee, the Committee on House Administration's Modernization Subcommittee, and House Leadership to deliver on projects and provide good stewardship of any and all funds.

Since introducing the CAO Coach program in 2021, they have focused on providing staff with the professional guidance they need and reaching staff wherever they are. Whether it's here in Washington, D.C., or in the district. The CAO Coach website has published more than 340 training videos with over 90 hours on job-specific topics. Since the program's inception, the Coach site has had more than 8,000 users and more than 17,000 video views.

In collaboration with the Committee on House Administration and the CAO Advocates, the CAO Coaches held five highly successful district staff conferences. In total, 391 Field Representatives, 478 Caseworkers, and 137 District Directors attended. 99.4% of attendees stated they are likely to recommend a future event to their colleagues. We are building on this progress over the next several months with more job-specific conferences here in Washington, D.C. and elsewhere. Even though we announced these conferences just a few weeks ago, we've already had almost 900 staff register to attend.

We have also expanded our resources and support for staff in the Human Resources (HR) Hub. Currently, the HR Hub has over 135 human resource-related documents and links. Since the launch of the HR Hub in August 2021, the best practices documents in the HR Hub have been downloaded more than 4,800 times.

During FY 2023, at the direction of the Committee on House Administration and the Select Committee on Modernization, we doubled-down on our efforts to provide strategic leadership development opportunities for Members. Specifically, we expanded the Congressional Excellence Program established in 2021. Thus far the program has supported more than 25 Congressional offices. We look forward to additional growth.

Of utmost concern is the imperative that the CAO remain vigilant when safeguarding the technical systems required to operate the House. When it comes to protecting the House against cyber threats, failure is not an option. To support this effort, House Information Resources (HIR)

continues to provide robust technical support to ensure that our House cybersecurity is as strong as possible. Whether it's safeguarding more than 3,000 House servers or deploying more than 250,000 software patches annually, the HIR Team protects the House from tens of millions of attempted cyber-attacks every year.

We are proud that Members and staff know they can depend on CAO. We are always evaluating how we can continue to provide the highest quality service and support to the House community. But these efforts require adequate funding.

Despite the wide array of services that CAO provides, we are intentional and strategic about the projects in which we choose to invest. Before any project is approved, our CAO teams must ensure that the project can be sustained into the out-years and has the necessary staff to support it. This provides consistency for Members and staff while also ensuring the CAO continues to be a good steward of taxpayer dollars. In working with the Acquisition Management team, we negotiate with our vendors and suppliers and press them on their implementation costs and requested price increases. However, the reality is our vendors and suppliers face inflation and increased costs that are passed on to us.

The FY 2024 budget request was carefully scrutinized by CAO management to ensure sufficient coverage for requested new initiatives, vendor and supply price increases, and licensing and service increases.

But if our FY 2024 funding were to be flatlined or potentially cut, we would have to seriously consider which projects we would have to curtail or sunset.

For example, it would be necessary for HIR to slow the adoption of cloud updates and reduce and slow our adoption of innovative services. Further, we would need to slow the expansion of House Digital Services and reduce the number of projects and initiatives they can sustain.

A flatlined budget would likely result in the cancelation of popular House-wide news subscriptions and media clipping services, which would likely put the burden of cost on individual Member offices. It may require us to reduce staff conferences and professional development trainings for House staff.

Members and staff could experience significant delays in furnishing consults, designs, installation, and repairs from our Logistics and Support team. For other CAO organizations, they will need to reassess their anticipated projects and initiatives to either delay them until funding is available or remove them from consideration.

Let me be clear: CAO staff is talented, resilient, and innovative. They will always look for opportunities to make the best use of taxpayer funds to ensure quality services for the House. If our FY 2024 budget is flatlined, as CAO I will protect core services and ensure Members have what they need to serve their constituents.

Through our partnership with the Committee on House Administration, we have made tremendous progress in providing the high-value projects and services that the House community deserves and depends on.

Ultimately, since the CAO's inception almost 30 years ago, we've made a tremendous impact on the House community. Our services have evolved considerably and are more comprehensive than ever. Our cyber defense against ever-growing threats is strong – a posture we cannot afford to compromise. I am confident, especially as I reflect on what we have accomplished in the past few years, that we will continue to mature and evolve so we can provide the full support and protection that Members and staff need to continue their work on behalf of the American people.

In closing, I want to thank you again for the opportunity to present the CAO's FY 2024 budget, and I look forward to working with the Subcommittee.