

TESTIMONY OF OMAR AWAN



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Before the House Appropriations Committee, Legislative Branch
Subcommittee

Public Witness Testimony - FY 2026 Member Day Hearing

Chairman Valadao, Ranking Member Espaillat, and Members of the

Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the Member Representational Allowance (MRA), specifically the Clerk Hire component, and the broader issue of how the House manages its most critical asset: its people.

This testimony concerns the **U.S. House of Representatives**, the **MRA Clerk Hire allowance**, and the effective stewardship of funds already appropriated to support congressional staff. I am not requesting the creation of a new program or line item, but rather a more deliberate, data-driven approach to managing existing resources.

I served more than 22 years at the House Chief Administrative Officer, most recently as Director of Strategy, where I was responsible for salary analysis and MRA formulation. In that role, I led the analysis that informed the first meaningful increase in Clerk Hire funding in over a decade. Following my retirement, I continued this work independently using publicly available data.

The Problem Has Evolved



In prior testimony, including my submission last year, I focused on the inadequacy of Clerk Hire funding and the consequences of chronic underinvestment: high turnover, loss of institutional knowledge, and offices forced to reallocate funds mid-year to meet payroll obligations.

Those challenges remain. However, the problem has evolved.

Today, the House faces not only a funding challenge, but a management challenge. Even where resources exist, Members and staff lack a shared, empirical understanding of:

- What sustainable staffing models look like
- How salaries progress across a House career
- Where pay compression and attrition risks emerge
- How staffing decisions in one role affect outcomes in others

As a result, compensation and staffing decisions are made office-by-office, year-by-year, without a reliable institutional benchmark.

The Analytical Work Behind this Testimony

Following my retirement from the House, I continued the analytical work I began when Director of Strategy at the House, using publicly available Statements of Disbursements, to conduct a longitudinal analysis of House staffing, compensation, turnover, and career progression.



This work required addressing structural challenges inherent in the data, including:

- Normalizing thousands of unique job titles into standardized Member office roles
- Accounting for dual-hat and shared staff positions, including distinguishing between types of shared staff
- Tracking compensation, tenure, and role progression across legislative years

The result is a role-based workforce model that reflects how the House actually staffs and compensates its offices, rather than how positions are described on paper.

To make the analysis usable, the findings were organized into structured, role-based outputs that allow for comparison across offices and over time. The institutional value lies in the methodology and longitudinal findings.

What This Analysis Makes Possible for the House

Used during budget formulation and oversight, this type of workforce analysis could help address several long-standing challenges:

1. Managing Human Capital with Evidence



For the first time, the House can empirically identify common staffing patterns, capacity constraints, and structural risks across Member offices—rather than relying on anecdote or office-by-office judgment.

2. Improving Salary and Budget Formulation

By identifying where pay compression and attrition pressure emerge along career paths, the House can align Clerk Hire formulation with real workforce dynamics earlier in the budget cycle, reducing the need for mid-year reallocations.

3. Reducing the Cost of Turnover

High turnover carries hidden operational costs: onboarding time, lost expertise, and reduced legislative capacity. Data-driven compensation alignment can mitigate these inefficiencies without requiring blanket increases.

4. Attracting the Next Generation of Staff

Perhaps most importantly, this data makes congressional careers legible. Prospective staff can see viable career paths, expected progression, and realistic compensation trajectories. This transparency is key when vying for talent against the private sector, executive branch, and state agencies.

A Modest, Practical Request



I am not requesting the creation of a new program or line item. Instead, I respectfully recommend:

- Earlier collaboration between appropriators, CHA, and data practitioners during MRA formulation
- Recognition of workforce analytics as a necessary input to budget decisions
- Exploration of a limited pilot or advisory use of existing data tools to inform Clerk Hire planning

These steps require minimal cost and build on work already underway.

Closing

The House already produces the data necessary to manage its workforce with the rigor expected of any modern organization. The question is whether that data will be incorporated systematically into budget formulation and oversight. Doing so will improve retention, save money over time, and strengthen the institution's ability to serve the American people.

I appreciate the Subcommittee's continued leadership on Legislative Branch modernization and welcome the opportunity to discuss this further.

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