

TESTIMONY FOR COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION HEARING,
MARCH 2023

Mr. HOYER. “I thank the Chairman, Ranking Member, and their colleagues on the Committee on House Administration for holding this hearing today and for inviting us to testify. One of the committee’s most important responsibilities is managing the Members’ Representational Allowance (MRA) and the pay and benefits that our hard-working Congressional staff receive.

“Much like the rest of our government, the House depends on competent, devoted public servants to function effectively for the American people. From developing critical legislation to supporting our constituents, our staffers carry out crucial work on behalf of the country. Nevertheless, the House faced retention problems because of the longer hours, lower pay, and fewer benefits that many staffers received. House Democrats recognized these issues and took action to advance key initiatives that help the House recruit and retain the most talented and hardworking individuals and build a workforce that reflects the diversity of the nation that we all serve. Crucially, we secured cost of living adjustments, new benefits, and pay floor and pay ceiling increases for our Congressional staff. House Democrats are committed to building on this progress in the months and years ahead.

“I have long advocated for Congress to find ways to improve pay and benefits for our staff. I’ve been fortunate to have Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries and former House Administration Committee Chair Zoe Lofgren as partners in that effort. Sending numerous

letters and testifying before this committee and others like it that have influence over House personnel, we made important progress on this issue in the 117th Congress.

“When I testified before the House Modernization Committee in 2021 on this priority, I outlined the approach that we ought to take to enhance our recruitment, improve staff retention, and build a more diverse Congressional workforce. First, I said that we needed to modernize our system for staff pay. The House made important strides toward that goal these past few years. We successfully pushed Congress to secure a 21% MRA increase across the board in the Fiscal Year 2022 appropriations package. Similarly, in the Fiscal Year 2023 Omnibus, we secured a 4.6% MRA increase to accommodate a cost-of-living adjustment for staff consistent with their Executive Branch counterparts in the military and civilian workforce. To further reflect that intent, we also raised both the pay floor and pay ceiling for House staff. Going forward, we need to continue to include annual cost-of-living adjustments in the MRA, committee, and leadership budgets.

“The second strategy for staff recruitment and retention that we have emphasized is improving benefits to set our staff and their families up for success. The CAO Task Force on a Diverse and Talented Workforce identified many commonsense measures that would make a tremendous difference in the lives of our staff, such as tax-advantaged 529 college-savings plans and a fund to help our staff cover adoption costs and afford fertility treatments not covered by insurance. With the help of then Appropriations Committee Chair Rosa DeLauro, we managed to secure one of the CAO’s recommended benefits in the Fiscal Year 2023 Omnibus: expanded child-care support for House staff through Dependent Care Flexible Spending Accounts. Indeed,

no one should have to choose between caring for their children or advancing their career. Given the House daycare's limited capacity, and to support district staff living around the country without access to even those limited slots, many House staff need these enhanced supports to help cover child-care costs at the centers near their home. Implementation of this vital program falls under your committee's jurisdiction, which is why I urge you to take swift action to adopt the rules necessary to make this resource available to House staff.

“The 118th Congress must build on this progress. In addition to implementing the staff child-care benefit quickly, I hope that your committee will continue to work with us to maintain a strong staff-pay system and to secure other key benefits like 529 plans and financial support for adoption and fertility treatment. These are investments not only in our staff and their families but also in our institution's ability to operate For The People.

“Democrats and Republicans ought to come together on this issue, and I look forward to working with the Chairman, Ranking Member, and the entire Committee on House Administration to ensure that we can recruit and retain the best individuals for our crucial work here in the People's House.