• Chairs Lofgren, Butterfield, Davis, and Steil – thank you for the invitation to testify at today’s Member Day hearing.

• And before I get into my testimony, Mr. Butterfield, I want to thank you for the great working relationship we share on Energy and Commerce.

• I am honored to be able to call you a friend.

• This is an important hearing today.

• As you may know, I am a trained and licensed pharmacist – and I served patients in Georgia for over 30 years before coming to Congress.

• I say this so you know that I have a background in health care.

• As a health care professional, I find the current House rules related to mask wearing, constituent meetings, and Capitol tours far too restrictive and frankly disrespectful to the millions of Americans we all serve.

• Members of Congress are directly elected by the people.

• And many refer to the House of Representatives as the “People’s House.”

• But the people, our constituents, are not able to visit our Capitol to witness their democracy work.

• They are limited to watching hearings and legislative business on a screen – the most impersonal form of participation with their government.

• The House, under the Democrat party’s lead, has shut out the public.

• Members are prohibited from giving tours, constituents can’t personally visit their Representatives office without going through a ridiculously
cumbersome sign-in process, and just forget about letting constituents visit the House Chamber.

- Meanwhile, on the other side of the dome, Senate offices can take meetings and give constituents tours of the same Capitol building we can’t.

- It is understandable that certain precautions were necessary when the pandemic started as we knew very little about the virus.

- But our knowledge has evolved.

- We know how to mitigate spread and we have vaccines.

- So at what point is limiting constituent involvement in the democratic process no longer about the virus – well, we hit that point a LONG time ago.

- The virus is here to stay.

- We have effective, free vaccines for every American.

- It’s time we open our capitol back up and let the Americans that elected us visit their Capitol and their Representatives without restrictions.

- Furthermore, the mask mandate is long past necessary.

- The District of Columbia recently removed its mask mandate.

- Why is it that I can walk into any grocery store, go to church, or go out to eat in DC without a mask – but when our staff and ourselves enter the Capitol and House office buildings, we are all required to wear masks.

- These are not safety precautions; these are Orwellian requirements.
• It’s time we let our constituents, the American people, participate in their democracy like the founding fathers intended.

• And it’s time to make scientific, medically based decisions about COVID mitigation methods.

• The rules in place right now are based on feelings, not facts.

• It’s time to return to the pre-pandemic normal in our Capitol.

• I yield back.