

**Statement of
The Honorable Philip G. Kiko
Chief Administrative Officer
United States House of Representatives
Before the
House Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress**



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Submitted Testimony

Chairman Kilmer, Vice Chairman Graves, and Members of the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress, thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Select Committee on ways the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) of the United States House of Representatives can assist with efforts to ensure Members and their staff have the resources and tools they need to support the development of the next generation of leadership here at the House.

I also want to thank the Select Committee for its effective leadership on this topic. Fostering the next generation of leadership has also been recognized by Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who, in her testimony before the Select Committee at the Member Day hearing, highlighted the expansion and improvement of leadership development initiatives as a priority for this Congress.

I would like to quote former Representative Martin Frost, who, in his testimony before the Select Committee at the Former Members Day hearing, said, "Congress must identify leaders – and servants – in its staff. Then, they must be given the education and career growth needed to advance their public service careers."

As the Select Committee is acutely aware, the House is extraordinary in so many ways. While one could draw comparisons between the House and other federal and state government entities, there are many legislative and operational elements that are unique and experienced only by those employed by this chamber. As an individual who has worked on the Hill for decades in multiple capacities, I embrace that uniqueness. However, I also recognize the challenges it presents.

We all know the pace at the House can be grueling. Members and staff are always busy, and burnout occurs. Staff turnover is high. Budgets are tight. Therefore, we, including the CAO, must do everything within our means to support Members and their staff and equip them with the tools and resources they need to succeed in representing an average of 750,000 constituents in each district. We can and must do better to prepare our next generation of leadership.

I would like to offer the Select Committee a few thoughts to consider. Over the past few years, the CAO has developed and worked to implement its own comprehensive strategic plan for the organization that centers around customer service. Critical to providing excellent customer service is understanding the House community we serve and our customers' needs. We must also ensure that our own workforce has the required skillsets and support they need to provide outstanding customer service.

In addition to improving its customer services, the CAO can improve and streamline the transition processes for new Members so they can dedicate more time to big decisions, like staff hires and committee assignments, rather than administrative matters.

Congressional Staff Academy

In our efforts to better understand the House environment and our customers' needs, the CAO identified and immediately worked to address a gap in professional development offerings provided to House staff. As mentioned, the House is a unique environment that requires highly specialized professional development and career advancement curriculum. To fill this gap, the CAO launched the new Congressional Staff Academy, which began ramping up its operations in late 2018. The academy delivers a growing variety of seminars and trainings for House staff specifically requested by staff in Member, Committee, and Leadership offices.

The Academy conducted a training needs assessment, gathering direct feedback from nearly 600 individual House staffers about the types of information they need to support their Member of Congress. In fact, the Academy just launched its second training needs assessment to assess current operations and to identify opportunities to develop and offer courses on new topics.

For Members to be effective, their staff need to be effective. To be effective, staff must be informed and understand how to perform their jobs well. This is particularly important for new Member offices as their staff must quickly adapt to the Hill environment. The Academy's curriculum, tailored to the House environment, provides staff with the resources and tools to better perform their duties.

The Academy's seminars and trainings are not only available on the House campus, many of them are also available as live or on-demand webinars. The Staff Academy has also budgeted and prioritized upgrades to its classrooms and broadcast technology to enable a better distance learning experience for district staff. Offering a remote option to attend or view these seminars and trainings ensure district office staff have the same developmental and training opportunities and even ones specific to the duties more commonly executed by district office staff.

This year, the Academy launched a nine-part leadership series available for Chiefs of Staff, Staff Directors, and District Directors. Developed in partnership with the Partnership for Public Service and the Marine Corps University, the series is designed to bolster leadership skills and identify best practices for building the skillset of each staffer on a team. 216 individuals have attended the five seminars offered to date, with 61 of them based in district offices.

The Academy is gathering feedback from attendees of these initial sessions and will use it to improve and further develop and expand the leadership curriculum. It will also evaluate the success of its partnerships and seek further opportunities to expand.

The Academy is also focused on helping staff develop subject matter expertise required here at the House. In early 2018, we began partnering with the Government Accountability Office to offer a comprehensive course on appropriations law, providing

an essential resource for staff who need to know how the government obligates and expends funds appropriated by Congress. We have provided that course, free of charge, on three occasions, with full registration each time, and we plan to offer it two more times this year. Earlier this year, the Academy began offering courses on official Committee Clerk procedures, and it is preparing for its third annual bicameral writer's workshop, a popular day-long conference the Academy hosts in conjunction with the Senate and covers a range of topics to provide instruction for the varied writing needs in a Capitol Hill office.

In terms of user experience, the Academy has also focused a lot of time and resources to make searching, registering for, and attending training a modern and streamlined experience. By the end of this quarter, the Academy's offerings will be supported by a new learning management system that enhances the registration experience for seminars and trainings. This new system provides a one-stop shop where staff can register for in-person courses, take online courses, and track their course completion status. It also gives supervisors the ability to assign their staff specific courses and track their progress, allowing them to provide a more hands-on approach to building the skills of their staff.

Additionally, the Academy offers all House staff access to LinkedIn Learning. The industry-leading platform contains a library of thousands of online, on-demand courses covering a broad spectrum of technical and developmental skillsets.

Trainings on specialized topics are particularly important to the House, and there are opportunities to expand our offerings to include more like the aforementioned trainings. In fact, I recall instances of informal groups of House staffers taking courses on topics like legislative procedure. These courses were offered after work hours, but they served as an important resource, and could become a sort of "forum for leadership" as staff learn and network together and develop vital skills as they progress in their careers at the House. Specific opportunities include the development of training on conducting Congressional oversight, constituent casework, navigating legislative processes, and D.C. and district office administration.

While these all describe the efforts currently underway to build the new Staff Academy, we are also researching and considering new ideas to make the Academy a world-class service that Members and their staff deserve. Some of these ideas include development of a semester-long orientation curriculum for staff of newly-elected Members.

Additionally, the Academy is exploring the possibility of delivering training curriculum in "cohorts." Keeping a "class" of learners together through an intensive program builds comradery, emphasizes shared learning experiences, and provides lessons from a broader spectrum of experience.

Finally, the Academy is considering options for facilitating training and professional certifications and skillsets from other industries that may, if adapted to the House, provide opportunities for Congressional staff to broaden their skills. These including

Project Management Professional, Lean Six Sigma, or other similar methodology. At a minimum, instruction in these topics can provide context for staff who frequently encounter business processes and management theories when conducting research or oversight of other branches of government or private industry.

I welcome any feedback or recommendations from the Select Committee for curricula to help ensure that you and your staff have the skills needed to succeed, and how to ensure your offices foster and retain valuable and talented staff.

Staff Retreat Facilitation and Executive Coaching

In addition to the training offerings available through the Congressional Staff Academy, the CAO's Office of Employee Assistance (OEA) provides a variety of services to the House community, including confidential counseling to staff on an array of personal and work-related issues. The OEA also offers opportunities to enhance collaboration and team building in the form of office retreats and one-on-one executive coaching for senior-level Congressional staff.

In fact, the OEA is experiencing a significant increase in requests from Member offices to lead and guide Congressional staff retreats in Washington, D.C., and districts across the country. From January to June 2019, the OEA team facilitated 29 retreats for Member offices, which is nearly triple the number the team conducted in all of 2018.

Whether working here on Capitol Hill or in a district office, Congressional staff face intense pressure to perform the duties of their position in service to the Member and the diverse needs of their constituencies. Due to the constant and steady stream of work, it can be difficult to slow down and strategize about key management practices that are needed for any efficient or effective organization. Fortunately, the OEA retreats provide offices with a proven framework to enhance team building, improve communication, and establish clear roles and responsibilities for staff.

House Wellness Center

In addition to providing the House community with professional development tools, it is important that effort is made to ensure staff are satisfied and supported in their work here. To be effective, one must be well-rounded. Here at the House, the risk of burnout is high, so it's crucial that Members and House staff have a solid work-life balance.

With that, I worked together with Members to launch the House Wellness Center in October 2018. The Center provides an expanding employee wellness program that offers in-person and online courses for D.C. and district staff and individual and group consultative services on topics ranging from mindfulness, nutrition, fitness, general health, and stress management.

The Center hosted its first Well-Being Fair in June, which drew more than 700 attendees interested in mindfulness sessions, financial wellness, healthy eating habits, and more.

Workforce Management Best Practices

Providing specialized professional development opportunities as well as other improved services to the House is critical to cultivating the next generation of leadership. However, equally critical is ensuring the CAO's 700 employees are qualified and engaged with the skillsets and support needed to continuously deliver and improve upon these services.

With that, over the past three years, the CAO's Human Resources (HR) team implemented some proven workforce management best practices. It designed and implemented a new performance management process; created and regularly delivers leadership training for managers; and is deploying workforce planning practices to recruit, hire, and manage talent. It is also designing competency models for staff, updating position descriptions, broadening its recruitment network, creating career paths, and enhancing career development activities within the CAO.

Taken together, our HR enhancements help us identify our staffing needs, recruit talented and diverse applicants, and maintain an engaged workforce, which improves product output, employee satisfaction, and retention. Though modified for the CAO, many of these workforce management best practices and models can easily be modified for Member and Committee offices and would likely yield positive results.

For example, earlier this year, our HR team started an effort to define qualities and skillsets required of CAO employees. It organized these into three major categories – general, individual, and leadership.

First, we identified a set of seven general qualities and skills that all CAO employees need regardless of their position. The seven required general qualities and skills are: accountability, adaptability, collaboration, communication, customer orientation, priority management, and problem resolution. Even though this list was developed for CAO employees, many of the characteristics we identified align with the knowledge and skills necessary for all Congressional staffers.

Second, we are in the process of defining technical skills for each business unit and individual position within the CAO. For example, for our Office of Finance, the list outlines the types of qualities and skills one would expect for employees in accounting, budget, and finance positions.

Finally, to complement the lists of required general and individual skills, the HR team identified five leadership skills necessary for our senior staff across the CAO. This list of high-level skills includes: coalition building, decision making, leading people, results orientation, and strategic planning. Based on my knowledge of working for both Member

offices and Committees, I suspect each of the leadership characteristics identified for senior CAO staff are easily adaptable and relatable to the type of skills needed by Chiefs of Staff, Staff Directors, Legislative Directors, and other senior Congressional staff.

As the Select Committee considers its options, my office welcomes the opportunity to provide more detail on the methodology and process we are taking to define the technical, general, and leadership qualities and skills necessary for our employees.

Mentoring Opportunities

Former Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, in her testimony before the Select Committee at the Former Members Day hearing, recounted how she was “thrown into the fire” when she was elected to the House through a special election, and how her fellow, more senior Members taught her about administrative items at the House such as the mail operation and franking privileges.

In my experience, formal or informal mentoring for staff in House offices is valuable, which is why the CAO launched its own internal mentoring program. Our program pairs junior staff with more experienced staff and helps them learn more about the organization’s operations and what is required for career advancement.

Establishing a similar program for Congressional offices could facilitate the same type of knowledge sharing and help cultivate the next generation of House leaders.

Simplifying the Administrative Experience During Transition

Earlier this year, the CAO supported the second largest Congressional Transition in its history, welcoming 92 new representatives and one new delegate to the 116th Congress. On the first day of the new Congress, 93 new Member websites were up and running. Over the course of Transition, our House Information Resources team configured hundreds of computers and mobile devices for new Members and their staff, and in week one alone, processed 1,826 technical service requests. Our Logistics and Support team moved 13,033 pieces of equipment, cleaned and/or refurbished 1,797 furniture pieces, and installed close to 13,000 yards of carpet. Our Payroll and Benefits team processed nearly 60,000 transactions between October 2018 and January 2019. And our Payroll and Benefits and Office of Employee Assistance teams conducted over 500 one-on-one consultations with new and departing Members and staff on topics related to pay, benefits and career planning.

Leading up to and following the election in November, the CAO coordinated closely with House stakeholders, including the Committee on House Administration, the Architect of the Capitol, and the Sergeant at Arms to facilitate 87 departing Member office move-outs in 13 days; 288 seated, new Member, and Leadership office moves in 26 days; and 38 majority and minority Committee office moves in 19 days. Simultaneously, these

same teams were supporting the hundreds of district office closure and opening activities as well.

Following the Transition, the CAO conducted a survey to gather detailed feedback about Member, Committee, and Leadership experience during the Transition. We are also conducting an in-depth examination of the 116th Transition and developing a comprehensive playbook to identify successes and opportunities for improvement.

Based on my personal experience, direct feedback from Members, and feedback the CAO has gathered, the administrative transition processes for new Members are overly burdensome.

From November elections through the start of a new Congress, there is far too much time spent by Members and Members-elect on administrative items, such as executing a lease for a district office, outfitting the offices with the necessary furniture and equipment, and facilitating the setup the office's IT systems.

Over the years, working with the Committee on House Administration, the CAO has worked to streamline and simplify some of the office setup processes. For example, as mentioned, at the start of each Congress, the CAO automatically provisions each new office with a fully functional website so that constituents can access their websites from day one, and Member offices can later decide if they want to redesign their website or use an external vendor.

Similarly, there are other processes that we can potentially automate for incoming Members so that they don't spend their valuable time on administrative decisions that could be made when they better understand what their specific administrative needs are. It is important that we take care of as much of the administrative work as possible so that Members can spend more of their valuable time and resources on fulfilling their Constitutional duties.

Concluding Statement

Philip G. Kiko

Chief Administrative Officer

The House's most valuable resources are its people – the Members and staff who serve this amazing institution. It is crucial that Members and staff have the resources they need to focus on their duties and to develop and hone their skillsets. It is equally important that the administrative burden be eased so that Members and staff can serve the American people.

The Office of the Chief Administrative Officer, through services it provides, including the Congressional Staff Academy, Office of Employee Assistance, and House Wellness Center, provides many opportunities for House staff to sharpen their skills and find the path to leadership. Additionally, I hope that my HR team's work around workforce

management best practices can serve as a model that Member, Committee, and Leadership offices can use to foster talent and promote growth among their staff.

I appreciate the opportunity to present information about the resources provided by the CAO to support and develop the next generation of leadership here at the House. I invite feedback from the Select Committee on ways the CAO could improve the resources it provides and how the organization could reduce the administrative burden placed on House offices.