

Chair Kilmer, Vice Chair Timmons, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today about the CAO's efforts to improve Congressional staff retention through our staff training programs. It is also an honor to be here with you and the other panelists including representatives from some of the nation's leading Congressional training organizations—we look forward to collaborating with all of you.

The CAO's motto is "Member Focused, Service Driven" and this drives everything we do. Part of being "Member Focused" is being "Staff Focused." We support the staff so they can support the Member and the entire office can support their constituents.

We're proud to support Members and staff through payroll and financial services, logistics, counseling and employee assistance, photography and creative services, technology support, cybersecurity protection and vendor contracting to name just a few.

We also take great pride in providing the training programs staff need to develop the skill sets they need to be successful. We continue to see an enormous need in this area and are committed to continually stepping up our efforts to provide the most needed and relevant staff training.

House staff come from many backgrounds with no formal prior job specific training. Staff may feel overwhelmed and uncertain at various points and have to learn on the job through trial and error and observation. At the same time, we have talented and experienced people on the House campus who can and want to help each other. We want to facilitate the sharing of best practices between 441

unique but parallel offices who are doing the same things—many of which are done nowhere else.

The CAO leadership wants to use our role, our resources, and our location to bring staff together in a non-partisan way, to better prepare them for their work and to give them the confidence and skills to succeed. Our hope is that staff will stay on the Hill and become experts and leaders as they work on behalf of the American people and benefit our institution.

CAO training has evolved. It began with a few classrooms where you could learn WordPerfect and other technical skills. In 2017, the CAO launched a House-focused professional development organization, the Congressional Staff Academy, that would better align with the needs of Members of Congress and their staff.

This effort resulted in new state-of-the-art classrooms, administrative systems, and most importantly, developed classes to address the needs of the House-specific job profiles in Member and Committee offices.

A team of professional educators and instructors composed of staff and consultants designed an operation that implements industry-leading practices in the instructional design, development, and content delivery geared toward adult professionals. Additionally, the Staff Academy team enabled House offices to find, access, and track their development online and via mobile devices, which is helpful for D.C. and district staff. This foundational work while challenging has paid great dividends especially now that we are fully virtual.

Initially, the Academy team focused its limited resources on developing introductory professional development for select staff profiles including Chiefs of Staff, Communication Directors, Schedulers, Caseworkers, and new managers.

Additionally, they worked to create and rollout the Workplace Rights training to every House employee in person, across the country, totally over 13,000 individuals.

The Staff Academy conducts a thorough biennial needs assessment by surveying, interviewing, and meeting with hundreds of staff in every role in a Member and Committee office. This adds to constant feedback our staff receive and value through regular conversations and frequent engagement with staff in Member and Committee offices. This is used to identify yearly course development plans.

Since 2018, the Staff Academy has grown in its course offerings, and its attendance both in volume and efficiency. For example, in 2018 the Staff Academy had 1,601 students register for classes with a 28% attendance rate. In 2020 they had 8,548 students register for classes with a 64% attendance rate, and this year they are on pace to exceed those numbers already serving 3,676 and maintaining a 64% attendance rate for students from Member and Committee offices. These numbers do not include required trainings such as Ethics, Cyber or Workplace Rights and Responsibilities, which combined means the Academy schedules, delivers, and tracks attendance for more than 40,000 individual seats in classes on an annual basis.

That said, we are not satisfied with progress to date. With a continued focus on meeting the needs of Members and Staff, we are doubling down on our vision for the Staff Academy to be an essential resource for every staffer in the People's House.

This year, we are launching a new program focused on Member Office Staff Skills. This program will be led by full-time veteran D.C. and district staffers who have

excelled and know what other staff need. They will be teaching others what they've learned the hard way—and they'll be recruiting their colleagues to train and mentor as well.

Our team will prioritize the everyday skills that staff use at the most basic level to be successful in their role. So, a new District Director will be able to learn from a veteran on how to communicate their Member's priorities at a community meeting, a new Chief might learn from a veteran Chief tips for writing their budget, and a new Legislative Assistant might learn how to approach the Rules Committee or write questions for a committee hearing. We'll use a mixture of best-practice panels, internal and external speakers, quick tips, emails, videos, idea sheets, one-on-one coaching techniques, peer-to-peer sessions, quick lunchtime classes, and traditional courses to provide a full spectrum of content to staff. Our hope is staff will learn the things no one ever tells you about to actually get things done.

So far, our small team of full-time staffers has made great strides. We are in the process of hiring four new instructors with extensive Member office experience. We hope to roll out our new program this summer. Next year, we plan to add an additional set of instructors after we evaluate our results this year.

As we expand the Congressional Staff Academy operations, I am confident that we are in a great position to deliver even greater value to the Members and staff of this institution, so we can fulfill our mission of helping you to do your constitutional duties. We ask for your support and partnership as we seek to develop and retain staff in the House.