

**Testimony of Ms. Kay Sargent, ASID, IIDA, CID, LEED AP, MCR.w, WELL AP
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On Behalf of the International Facility Management Association (IFMA)
Before the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee,
Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency
Management
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Welcome:

Chairman DeFazio, Committee Chairwoman Titus, Ranking Member Webster and Members of the Committee:

First, on behalf of the International Facility Management Association – IFMA – and our 20,000 members who run commercial buildings all over the world in over 100 chapters, including strong chapters in Oregon, Nevada and Florida, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. IFMA is the largest professional association for facility managers and our members run billions of square feet of commercial space.

As lead of the global WorkPlace practice at HOK, one of the world’s largest architectural firms, I can tell you that at no time has the essential role of the facility manager been clearer than over the past year. FMs in the public and private sector have met the challenges of the pandemic. They now will have critical roles in safely reopening and maintaining America’s building infrastructure.

This is an historic time. In my 37-year career as a workplace strategist and designer, this is the first real opportunity we've had to rethink how and where we work.

Before the pandemic, the rise of coworking space was already disrupting the commercial real estate market and changing our perspectives on workplace. This has been reflected in recent Congressional activity including establishment of the Public Buildings Reform and Savings Board and a continuing investment in FMs through the Federal Buildings Personnel Training Act. Then COVID hit, bringing the industry to a crossroads¹.

Key Role of Changing Workplaces:

The average buildings stand for 70 years. Interior spaces are typically renovated once a decade. In other countries spaces are flipped more frequently, and thus can evolve and react to changes in a more timely manner. Your decisions will determine the fate of federal work environments for the next generation of Americans.

This terrible pandemic sent us all home to work. But the past year has taken a heavy toll on our citizens' physical and mental health—with a disproportionate impact on women and racial and ethnic minorities.

Now, thankfully, we can think about returning to the office. As we do, the whole world is asking one question: What's the future of work?

Even before COVID, our offices weren't working. Many offices didn't support the collaborative ways we work. The technologies we rely on. Our flatter organizational structures. Or our need to focus on operations and maintenance—not just design and construction. One thing we know is that returning to the office of yesterday is not the answer.

¹ HOK, *Workplace Beyond 2021; Designing Spaces that Bring Us Back to a New Degree of Normalcy*, January 2021.

Companies know they are in a fierce war for talent and a race to innovate. To attract the best people and give them what they need to succeed, they are rethinking their space. Designing space around the world has given us insight into how aggressively other countries are innovating to also create smart cities and state-of-the-art environments.²

We need to transform the office from a place where people *have* to be to an ecosystem of spaces where people *want* to be. Spaces that break down silos and offer choices about how to work. That are flexible and resilient to business changes.

There are three components to this next-generation ecosystem that will support hybrid work:

1. The Hub is the reimagined office—the primary physical place where the organization’s people come together.
2. The Home where we can do individual work remotely.
3. The Spoke is a plug-and-play place outside the main hub but with more amenities than we have at home: be it a coworking center or a satellite office.

In this new work ecosystem, overall office space per agency could be reduced while providing more enticing environments and better experiences for their people.

It would help us address environmental and human sustainability and well-being, which will improve productivity.

² Space Planning Benchmark Report, Special Appendix COVID 19 Impact on Facility Management, July 2020.

We need to leverage technology and continue to invest in the people running our buildings. New requirements for building performance coupled with new expectations in the post-pandemic era require additional investments in facility managers. Smart buildings require smart people. Industry research has shown a 15:1 return on investment for building personnel. This connection between training and performance cannot be overstated.³

I'm honored to be serving on the GSA's "Workplace 2030" taskforce looking at these issues. This group knows what needs to be done, but they need a bigger platform and mandate to do it.

Key Recommendations:

Disposition of Excess Federal Property:

IFMA has long supported the realignment of Federal Real Estate Portfolio to reduce waste, increase productivity and ensure that federal buildings are assets, not liabilities in an organizations strategic purpose. In the 114th Congress a Bi-Partisan group of law makers supported the establishment of a Public Buildings Reform and Savings Board to evaluate the civilian real estate portfolio, identify opportunities for efficiency and dispose of excess property. With that board now established and operating and as Congress works with the Administration to identify excess property it is critical that operational costs and effective facility management continue to be considered when assessing property value and use. Design and construction costs of a facility are a small fraction of the overall expense of a building over its useful life. As most federal facilities are designed to last 50 years or more, the sale of these facilities would yield proceeds from the value of the property, but more importantly result in significant savings from avoided operational costs and other factors associated with building operations. As

³ Nicholas A. Rocha, "Evaluating the Value, International Facility Management Association", April 2017

Congress looks to update the federal real estate portfolio IFMA recommends broad-based consideration of related factors including:

- Retention of savings realized through sale by agencies to address deferred maintenance costs and compliance with the Federal Buildings Personnel Training Act of 2010
- Continued Updates to the Federal Real Property Profile to Include information facility condition, energy performance, FBPTA compliance, space utilization rates and workforce productivity metrics
- Utilization of Public Private Partnerships to help reduce Operations and Maintenance backlogs

Leverage existing properties to create an ecosystem of work environments.

We need to embrace the opportunity to address the disruption being brought forth and proactively rethink how we can best serve the workforce, and agencies alike. We need to innovate and evolve. We need to transform the office from a place where people have to be to an ecosystem of spaces where people want to be. Spaces that break down silos and offer choices about how to work. That are flexible and resilient to business changes.

VALUE OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR FACILITY MANAGERS:

In creating and maintaining high-performance buildings capable of significantly reducing energy and water use while promoting worker health and safety, a well-trained facility management staff is an essential element. Hiring and training professional facility managers ensures a working knowledge of industry trends, best practices and that building systems continue to perform as intended. In the 2010 Congress enacted Federal Buildings Personnel Training Act. Signed into law by President Obama in December 2010 the bill's premise was simple: if buildings are maintained properly by trained and certified facility managers, they will perform better at lower cost, and

ultimately be worth more at their time of disposition, thereby providing a return on investment to the American taxpayer. At a time when taxpayers continue to make significant investments in federal property, and as the General Services Administration and Congress look to realign the federal building portfolio and dispose of excess property, having qualified facility managers execute these tasks is critical. Many agencies have made significant progress in implementing the law and are great examples of best practices, yet others continue to wait on the sidelines hoping Congress will not hold them accountable for compliance. Moreover, the current shift in the federal real estate portfolio from government owned buildings to leased space means an increasing number of federal tenants will not be protected by FBPTA requirements. In order to best address these realities, Congress must consider:

- *Expanding FBPTA Requirements to cover leased space and not just government owned property as is currently required.*

Clarify the intent of the FBPTA to focus on utilization of existing industry education programs ensure compliance

Long Term Facility Planning:

Effective long- term facility planning requires regular funding and commitment. Congress now has the opportunity to commit not only to enhanced remote work programs and flexibility, but also to building, operating and maintaining workplaces of the future which can continue to be a shining example of American ingenuity and leadership. Even before the pandemic there was a significant effort underway in Congress to better understand the costs of changes in telework policy. These ongoing considerations must continue to be part of the conversation around COVID 19 response in federal buildings.

Conclusion

The main takeaway I want to leave you with is that we must create government workplaces that empower American ingenuity and keep us competitive in global markets. And we have a unique opportunity to create government workplace ecosystems where

the most exceptional people *want* to be. But we must take the steps to do so now. If we do this, we will help our public sector buildings improve occupant health, safety and productivity while preserving their asset value and performance.

Thank you again for inviting me to be here on behalf of IFMA. We stand ready to help. I look forward to your questions.