

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 27, 2022

Hon. Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. Kay Granger
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. Zoe Lofgren
Chairwoman
Committee on House Administration
1309 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. Rodney Davis
Ranking Member
Committee on House Administration
1216 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwomen DeLauro and Lofgren and Ranking Members Granger and Davis:

Thank you for your leadership in securing a major step toward improving staff recruitment and retention in Congress. In Fiscal Year 2022 appropriations, Congress increased the Member Representational Allowance (MRA) across the board by 21% in order to provide House staff with a long-overdue salary catch-up. This will make a big difference for staff morale and for the effectiveness of the legislative branch to fulfill its responsibilities as a co-equal branch of government under our Constitution.

As a follow-up to that successful effort, we write in support of including language in the Fiscal Year 2023 Legislative Branch Appropriations Act that employees supported by MRA, committee, and leadership budgets should receive the same 4.6% cost-of-living adjustment in Calendar Year 2023 that President Biden has proposed for all federal civilian employees and uniformed personnel. We are also asking that your committees work together to find a way to link the House's maximum salary cap to that of Level II executive-branch senior appointed officials statutorily, similar to current Senate practice, while continuing to preserve the Speaker's flexibility to adjust that level as needed. We must continue to do whatever we can to ensure that Members, committees, and leadership offices can recruit and retain the most talented Americans to serve the legislative branch and that our workforce is diverse and reflective of our nation.

Along with Chairwoman Lofgren, we sent a letter last May outlining several possible reforms to employee benefits. Among those possible benefit enhancements we suggested were:

- Reimbursing staff for the costs of adoption or fertility treatment not covered by insurance;
- Providing child-care subsidies for staffers who do not use the House daycare;
- Offering staff access to a tax-advantaged "529" or college-savings benefit;
- Making staff eligible for the Public-Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program through the U.S. Department of Education and ensuring coverage for the repayment of private student loans as well;
- Extending to staff a first-time homebuyer's assistance benefit; and

- Enabling staff of offices that are closing down operations to stay on the House payroll for sixty additional days past the date of office closure, a benefit the Senate already extends to its workforce.

Additionally, the Appropriations Committee included this report language in its legislative branch legislation for Fiscal Year 2022. The Committee Report for the Fiscal Year 2022 Legislative Branch Appropriations Act stated that “to maintain an equitable and diverse workforce, the House of Representatives needs to ensure there are significant efforts made to compete with private sector benefits to recruit and retain staff. The Committee directs the CAO, using the mechanisms of the new task force, to conduct a feasibility study on benefits and efforts to retain staff in the House. This should include a list of known benefits and a review of potential benefits including: (1) tuition credits, (2) authority and resources to establish matching contributions to 529 qualified education plans for employees of the House, (3) House-wide paid time off system and (4) child daycare credits. The CAO should complete this report within 120 days of the official posting of this report.” In response to that language and our letter, CAO replied with a letter to the Appropriations Committee on October 21 of last year updating us on previous efforts toward this end as well as an update on the launch of its new Task Force on a Diverse and Talented Workforce.

In particular, we appreciated the conclusions drawn in the CAO’s July 2021 report on staff pay and benefits, which affirmed the challenge the House is facing. “Historically, pay and benefits for House employees have broadly aligned with or even exceeded pay and benefits available in the Executive Branch...,” it reads. “However, over the past decade, that alignment has diverged, and the House has fallen behind the Executive Branch with respect to pay and benefits.” The new Task Force on a Diverse and Talented Workforce is a positive step, and it is one that reflects the clear commitment of the CAO to address this issue.

We hope that the Task Force on a Diverse and Talented Workforce completes its work in time to include in its final report and recommendations as many of the above policies as is fiscally feasible. We hope that your committees work to develop legislative language and appropriate funding levels so that we can begin their implementation in the Fiscal Year 2023 Legislative Branch Appropriations Act.

As we have written previously, we believe strongly that making positive changes to staff pay and benefits policies will have an enormously beneficial effect on the operations of the House and of Members’ and committees’ ability to serve the American people. Making pay and benefits more competitive will help ensure that we can attract and retain the most talented and hardworking individuals to serve as House staff. Doing so will also improve staff diversity by making House employment more accessible to those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and to those obligated to repay expensive student loans. Already, the House Office of Diversity and Inclusion is helping to grow our institutional capacity and provides a helpful tool for Members, committees, and leadership offices as they seek to recruit a more diverse workforce.

We thank you again for your efforts to secure the major increase in funding for MRA, committee, and leadership office budgets to raise staff pay in Fiscal Year 2022. We recognize that the Chief Administrative Officer and her team are working diligently on this issue as their report is finalized, and we look forward to the actions and findings of the new Task Force on a Diverse and Talented Workforce. Again, it is our hope that the House can work to adopt as many of its

recommendations as is feasible in its Fiscal Year 2023 appropriations to ensure that we can recruit and retain top talent so we can best deliver results For the People.

Sincerely,



STENY H. HOYER
HOUSE MAJORITY LEADER



HAKEEM JEFFRIES
DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS CHAIR

cc: The Hon. Catherine Szpindor, Chief Administrative Officer
The Hon Tim Ryan,
The Hon. Jamie Herrera Beutler