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Testimony Before the House Committee on Oversight & Reform
Steny H. Hoyer, House Majority Leader
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“Thank you, Chairwoman Maloney and Ranking Member Jordan.

“I appreciate this opportunity to submit this testimony for today’s hearing. On December 4, I sent a letter, along with Chairman Connolly of the Subcommittee on Government Operations and Reps. Holmes Norton, Sarbanes, Beyer, Brown, Raskin, Trone, and Wexton urging conferees working to reconcile the House- and Senate-passed versions of the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to include paid family and medical leave benefits for all federal employees. I believe this is a crucial instrument for the recruitment and retention of talented and patriotic Americans to serve their country in our federal workforce.

“I am glad that NDAA conferees have agreed to include paid parental leave in the conference report. However, this must be seen as only a first step. While I am relieved that all federal employees will enjoy this benefit after October 1, 2020, and not only Department of Defense employees as some had suggested, I am disappointed that paid benefits are limited only to the birth or adoption of a child and not time needed to care for oneself or a sick relative. I hope the Congress can finish this work and extend that benefit soon.

“Paid family and medical leave remains a top priority for Democrats – and not only for our federal workforce. Extending these benefits to federal employees, in my view, would encourage their further adoption in the private sector. As Rep. DeLauro and the expert witnesses today will attest, paid family and medical leave has already been adopted by many American businesses successfully and on a universal basis in other industrialized democracies abroad, with demonstrable benefits to workforce productivity and workers’ wellbeing.

“I was proud to cosponsor Chairwoman Maloney’s Federal Employee Paid Leave Act in March, which would guarantee twelve weeks of paid leave not only for the birth or placement of a child but also for time needed to care for a sick relative or seek treatment for an illness oneself. I want to thank the Chairwoman for her leadership on this issue, going back a very long time. Paid parental leave is a positive step; but it is not the full victory for hardworking federal employees that we seek. We will not rest until the full measure of paid family and medical leave has been made accessible to those who serve our country in federal civilian positions – and, eventually, all American workers.

“I thank the Committee for holding this hearing to explore the many benefits to our economy and our people by making paid family and medical leave more broadly available.”