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One Hundred Seventeenth
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION

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February 8, 2022

Ms. Barbara Childs Wallace
Chair of the Board of Directors
Office of Congressional Workplace Rights
110 Second Street, SE
Room LA-200
Washington, D.C. 20540-1999

Dear Ms. Wallace,

As you are aware, when Congress overwhelmingly passed the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 (CAA) on near unanimous votes in both the House and Senate, it extended a number of statutory protections for workers in the private sector to employees in the legislative branch. Among others, Congress expressly provided for employees to organize and bargain collectively. However, the CAA required the Office of Congressional Workplace Rights (then called the Office of Compliance) to issue regulations which would first have to be approved by Congress.

The following year, in 1996, OCWR fulfilled its role by adopting regulations and submitting them to Congress for approval. The regulations proposed by OCWR provided additional guidance for how legislative branch employees could exercise their statutory right to form or join labor organizations, as Congress expressly intended. Congress failed to act on the proposed regulations at that time.

The Committee on House Administration (CHA) recently held an oversight hearing on OCWR, on November 9, 2021, which included discussion of this specific issue. In her testimony, your colleague, Director Barbara Camens noted that in the ensuing quarter century since OCWR recommended regulations to Congress, the current members of the Board of Directors “have not looked at them, we have not reexamined them, and we have not taken a position on them.” Ms. Camens also noted that OCWR’s adoption of regulations in 1996 predated the service of the “current iteration of the board.”

Much has changed since 1996. For example, CHA recently took a lead role in drafting and enacting a reform law with significant bipartisan input and support to update the protections of the CAA to provide greater protections for legislative branch employees, including making it easier for them to assert their rights and protections under the law. Accordingly, I request that

the Board of Directors of the Office of Congressional Workplace Rights review the regulations it proposed in 1996 related to collective bargaining. It is my hope that an expeditious review will inform the House's consideration of how to better improve the workplace for our Congressional staff.

I appreciate your quick attention to this matter. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me directly or the Committee Staff Director, Jamie Fleet.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Zoe Lofgren", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Zoe Lofgren
Chairperson