

Mr. Chairman and Members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify here today.

The Office of Attending Physician or OAP was established in 1928, following the unexpected deaths of several Members and recognition of the need for medical care in Congress. Since my appointment in 2009, it has been my honor to serve as the seventh Attending Physician. The OAP is a small office of fewer than 50 people, with many responsibilities for health, safety and medical care on the Capitol Complex. I would like to speak briefly about the services the OAP provides other than the classified programs.

The OAP provides comprehensive medical care to Members of Congress (House and Senate) and the Supreme Court. Staff are accessible 24 hours a day, 365 days per year. In-person medical visits are available to Members whenever the House or Senate is in session and during business hours when out of session. The OAP is voluntarily accredited by the Joint Commission. The OAP achieved the Gold Seal of Approval in 2014 and has been continuously accredited since that time.

We provide preventive care, vaccinations, first aid and nursing services to Members and staff through our Health Units located throughout the Capitol complex. We supervise and equip all of the lactation suites. We also provide First Aid, CPR and Naloxone classes.

OAP personnel supervise air quality, water quality, food safety, pest control and overall workplace comfort and safety issues. For example, our staff conducts health inspections of all food service establishments. We also work with the Capitol Police and the Architect to ensure individuals are complaint with environmental health educational and medical surveillance programs.

We provide medical expertise for Congressional travel and contingency support planning, such as medical threat assessments for STAFFDEL and CODEL travel, medical care for CODEL travel and other classified contingency support.

The OAP provides medical care for large special events, such as the State of the Union Address and Presidential Inauguration, Joint Sessions of Congress, large scale ceremonies, Member retreats and Party National Nominating Conventions.

The OAP is also tasked with providing medical emergency care to staff, visitors and other members of the public. We triage and stabilize individual patients and manage mass casualty situations. For example, the OAP provided care for numerous heat injuries during the outdoor Memorial Service for Senator John McCain and the West Front Peace Officer Memorial assemblies. The OAP also managed the response to the 2001 Anthrax attack and April 2013 Ricin episode.

We are often first on the scene for serious and violent events. For example, we mobilized to provide emergency care in 1998 when two Capitol police officers were shot and killed, in 2013 when a driver was shot and critically wounded outside the Hart Office Building (OAP recovered their infant in the car), and in 2016 for a shooting in the Capitol Visitors Center. We were the first responders in the 2018 Crozet Virginia Amtrak collision/derailment with dozens of injured Members and staff, as well as a fatality and life-threatening injuries on the ground. In 2021, we responded and provided critical support to Capitol police officers rammed by a vehicle. One Capitol Police officer sadly died in that incident. We also responded to numerous serious injuries to police officers and members of the public on January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021 and supported Congress's return to normal operations.

In March 2020, healthcare systems and providers across the nation, including the OAP, were faced with the largest international public health crisis in a century: SARS-CoV-2 or Coronavirus. Many Members and staff have been exposed to or contracted COVID-19. Sadly, I am aware of at least 5 deaths in the Congressional community among our 3361 COVID-19 cases. Other Members and staff have had serious ongoing health challenges. At all times, the staff of the OAP has been available 24-hours a day to

provide both remote and in-person care and advice to Members with COVID and their families, as well as resources for staff members and occasionally constituents.

In March 2020, the OAP was tasked with advisory participation in the Joint Congressional Continuity Board (JCCB) that established a Bicameral response plan for the early weeks of the pandemic and the operational posture of the organization. The Committee on House Administration also required the OAP to stand up a physician and nurse staffed COVID Response Center which responded to queries 24 hours a day and coordinated contact tracing activities. This resource remains available today to address any questions or concerns.

As an organization that principally provides primary care, the OAP staff does not include any epidemiologists, immunologists, microbiologists, infectious disease specialists, public health specialists, statisticians or other scientific staff. We do not have the expertise or resources to develop ad-hoc public health recommendations. Rather, the OAP sought the advice of national and regional experts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health, the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health and the Department of Defense. Ongoing dialogue with these experts ensured the OAP was knowledgeable of current federal COVID response guidelines. The OAP also coordinated with local government partners who were essential for sustainment of Congressional activities.

The OAP sought to maximize Congressional operations while reducing disease spread. The OAP made recommendations to reduce spread at large gatherings, including voting procedures, procedures for caucus meetings, as well as solemn ceremonies such as those for Congressman John Lewis, Senators Robert Dole and Harry Reid and Justice Ginsburg. The OAP sought at all times to enable the business of the Congress without excess COVID cases.

At a time when COVID testing resources were scarce or unavailable, the OAP successfully located a vendor for offsite and onsite testing COVID testing with a rapidly scalable capability. This enabled Members to obtain PCR test results rapidly and provided insight into disease spread. Currently, the Capitol COVID testing center provides gold standard PCR results within minutes. The present test positivity rate is less than 1%. Since March of 2020, The OAP performed 158,917 PCR tests.

The development of COVID Vaccines through Operation Warp Speed represents an astonishing medical success. The OAP was instrumental in ensuring Congress was prioritized in the national security based program for continuity of government vaccine access. This required acquisition and installation of an ultra-low cold storage chain, development of a protocol for operating the COVID Immunization Clinic, handling thousands of calls per day, with the invaluable assistance of many Library of Congress personnel, and development of an online scheduling tool. Today, COVID vaccines are available to Members and staff on a walk-in basis. OAP has administered over 32,400 coronavirus vaccinations.

As COVID treatments were developed, mechanisms were put in place to immediately prescribe medications locally and in home districts. Non-COVID health needs, including both mental and physical health conditions, were continuously addressed.

The OAP was also tasked with COVID-related communications, although certain other organizations such as the House Administration Committee and the Sergeant at Arms also communicated such information at certain times. The OAP communications endorsed interventions recommended by the CDC, including hand hygiene, social distancing, masking, cleaning, testing, and travel. The OAP thus was not immune to changes or reversals in CDC guidance.

The OAP health recommendations were the same to both Chambers of Congress. Leadership of each Chamber operationalized these recommendations with respect to their independent and unique bodies and the result was communicated via a Dear E-Colleague communication from the OAP.

I would like to conclude by recognizing the OAP staff for their uncommon dedication and altruism in support of individual good health and the Congressional mission while placing themselves at a direct increased health risk. I am appreciative of each and every one of them.