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ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

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September 14, 2020

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren
Chairperson
Committee on House Administration
1309 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Chairperson Lofgren,

The House of Representatives needs to do more to support its essential workers. It has been twenty-five weeks since the House began to feel the impacts of COVID-19 and it is past time that a transparent, wholistic plan for supporting a safe and phased physical re-opening of the House be made available to our workforce. Despite the adoption of hybrid hearings, increased telework operations, and proxy voting, we need to recognize that there are still a substantial number of staff that perform their duties in person.

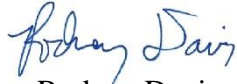
Over the past seven months, we have participated in numerous discussions, vendor demonstrations, and support office meetings to develop an understanding of how reopening strategies have been successfully formed and implemented in other government institutions, as well as the private sector. We have compiled the following building blocks of where our teams can work together to build a similar strategy for our chamber. As House Administration, it is irresponsible not to have an action plan in place regarding the operations of the House. I sincerely hope that we can begin this process immediately.

In closing, I know that we have many competing operational priorities. We have numerous construction projects to ensure we stay on track, various on-going IT initiatives, organizational reforms, all of the day-to-day operations, and the bi-annual Congressional transition. Those are all important priorities and collectively have hundreds of millions of dollars in resources behind them. I am asking that chief amongst all our priorities be our response to COVID-19 and to be creative in finding resources to assist.

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren
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I again want to express my desire to work together on these issues. I know that you care deeply about this institution, as do I, and that is why I am so passionate about this opportunity we have to be an example for the rest of the country on how to protect our workforce, open safely, and get back to work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rodney Davis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rodney Davis
Ranking Member

Attachment

Current Operations

The paragraphs in this section include a review of the House operations throughout 2020, an assessment of where House operations currently stand, and an analysis of what is working well, what needs to be improved, and benchmarks of success.

April through August 2020, highlighted the institution's vulnerabilities in facing a pandemic. From March 16, 2020 to May 4, 2020 the House committee hearing and Floor schedules came to a halt. The first guidance issued for the House regarding continuity came with the partisan adoption of hybrid hearing technology and proxy voting through H.Res. 965. The procedural changes increased House operational productivity, but were accompanied by numerous unsustainable elements, including a continued lack of Member-to-Member interaction, concerns regarding minority engagement, and unreliable technology performance. Additionally – and most importantly – these changes are statutorily temporary. During these initial months, the Office of the Attending Physician [OAP] continually provided health and safety guidance but, as guidance (not as regulation), Member offices remained in a limbo of uncertain safety compliance, and, to this day, remain confused about the proper use of MRA funds for PPE and office space/safety enhancements such as plexiglass shields or layout consultations. Today, Member office guidance and financial support to combat the pandemic continues to be a point of major concern.

With lack of clear operational guidance, the resilience of House Member Offices, both in the capitol complex and in the home districts is laudable. Despite a lack of official guidance, Member and support offices transitioned to nearly complete telework operations by April due an impressive effort by the Chief Administrative Officer. Additionally, although DC experienced peak COVID-19 cases the last week of April 2020¹, we continue to be at the same operating posture.

As DC and states across the country begin to reopen, it is our responsibility to ensure that clear guidance, benchmarks and stages are developed, clearly communicated, and efficiently implemented by taking advantage of the best technological tools and models available. Below are key elements to be included in a discussion on staged reopening.

Health monitoring program

The essential first step to reopening the House is adoption of a wholistic health monitoring program that equally leverages personal responsibility and institutional prudence. The current system, a 5-point questionnaire, is not sufficient to ensure the safety of our Members and staff – particularly when there is no training or incentives in place to ensure truthful compliance. Furthermore, no support has been provided to automate the process to help drive compliance.

¹ <https://coronavirus.dc.gov/data>

In researching and demoing various proven, private market solutions, the following functions should be adopted at minimum as part of a wholistic staff health monitoring program:

- Consistent and reliable temperature monitoring of all Members, member staff, and support staff;
- Accessible COVID-19 testing and symptom protocols;
- Contact tracing program run through the Office of the Attending Physician for all employees;
- Room capacity monitoring, in compliance with OAP-issued guidance;
- Central reporting program to OAP of any positive cases to inform overall state of institution;
- Privacy and employer legality protections.

The current program falls short of what is needed to ensure that member offices are compliant with OAP guidance recommendations. We need to craft and implement a health monitoring system that empowers staff and Members with tools to show beyond a reasonable doubt that they are not infected and that, if they show symptoms, we can aid in their diagnosis by providing testing resources and contacting other individuals with whom they had contact. We care deeply about the health and safety of our staff and need tools to both protect our workforce and support individuals if symptoms arise.

Vendors that have developed technology that can aid us in establishing an effective, easily implemented health monitoring program include:

- ServiceNow: workflow suite, PPE management, contact tracing, schedule management
- 42Chat: texting-based health screening product, immunity passport
- Fever PreCheck: temperature monitoring tool, immunity passport
- Density: room capacity monitoring system
- Visby Medical: on demand, single use COVID-19 testing kits
- One Medical: onsite COVID-19 testing, medical network access
- Ansys: advanced data modeling, air circulation modeling and analysis

Adoption of an effective health monitoring program for Members and staff will inform all stages of reopening and provide House leadership, House Administration, and the OAP with clear progress benchmarks.

Levels of support services

Availability of personal protective equipment [PPE] continues to be essential for all levels of House operation throughout the Capitol complex and in district offices. Finding a solution to inconsistent, or poorly communicated, funding and availability of masks, sanitizer, and other PPE supplies is a top priority. Member and staff safety is not a benchmark for reopening; it is the foundation of any and all action. In-person Floor votes and soft-openings of Hill offices have showcased that the House is capable of taking safe and effective steps to operate in-person. However, any set stages of reopening must

include consistent PPE access to maintain the virus-free environment we aim to establish without forcing Members to find funds within their MRA.

With consistent PPE access and community health insight provided by a health monitoring program, a staged reopening plan must be designed and communicated throughout all levels of house operations and management to help guide the House into its future recovery. Similar to the staged re-openings taking place across the country, each stage needs to be based on clear health benchmarks and include defined levels of House support services. This includes descriptions of what kind of service staff should expect, ie: in-person, virtual, part-time, and how the service offerings change in each stage:

- Cafeteria accessibility, altered hours, types of offerings
- Cleaning rotations
- Superintendent team hours and support services
- IT support hours and types of service
- Logistical support for in-person meetings
- House mail delivery/pick up services
- House Supply store hours
- House Flag Office
- House barber, USPS, banks, gift shop

Additionally, in facing the continual challenges presented by the pandemic, House support offices should be encouraged to take on new roles to assist Member Offices and be proactive in their approach to advising and assisting offices at each stage of reopening.

Visitors

Public access to the Capitol complex and to Member offices is essential to providing service to our constituencies. Communicating the House's plan to re-establish public access is a vital step in signaling that we are combating and recovering from the pandemic.

A staged reopening plan must include strategies for how the House will begin to re-welcome in-person visitors on official business and tours. Although it will be up to each Member office discretion what limitations their in-person meetings and tour offerings will include, it is House Administration's responsibility to establish guidance on what is baseline acceptable for the health and safety of the House community.

Private sector businesses and government institutions have successfully implemented programs for hosting in-person tours. While abiding by the North Carolina government's rules for reopening, The Biltmore Estate has been successfully offering in-person, indoor tours with masks throughout the summer by using timed ticket entries to ensure a reduced capacity for social distancing. The White House is reopening to tours this Saturday, September 12th with masks required and reduced capacity to ensure appropriate social distancing. Similarly, businesses ranging from restaurants to dentist offices to colleges

and universities have implemented reservation systems through which they've resumed in-person service to the American people safely, effectively, and responsibly with safeguards in place.

The House is equally equipped to adapt. Member schedulers can partner with HIR to develop member website-based reservation portals to manage in-person meetings, reserve meeting space, and help inform cleaning patterns. In order to follow social distancing guidelines offices need space to hold meetings outside of their personal offices. Large rooms within the House Office Buildings can be reconfigured into social distant meeting hubs, including such areas as cafeteria dining rooms, caucus rooms, the CVC auditorium, and numerous outdoor venues including The Spirit of Justice Park. Prior to the pandemic, large-format meeting room space was difficult to reserve and often, demand exceeded supply. By adopting a new reservation process, reformatting current House venues into meeting hubs, and adopting a room density monitoring system we can meet our Members' demands and experiment with ways to continually modernize House operations. Two example vendor technologies that could assist the House in doing the above efficiently include:

- ServiceNow: workflow suite, cleaning schedule management, work hub monitoring
- Density: room capacity monitoring system

A clear plan for visitor health screenings during each phase of reopening must be established and be tied to the reservation system to ensure all parties are informed of House rules and safety regulations. Phases for visitor accesses and monitoring need to be developed in coordination with the wholistic health monitoring program adopted by all House employees. It should include clear guidance, in accordance with the OAP, on how visitors are to be screened and comply with a potential contact tracing program. Additionally, we must ensure that our Members are equipped with the tools and resources to support their independent preferences for visitor testing. Tools that can assist with re-opening the House to the public responsibly include:

- 42Chat: texting based health screening product, immunity passport
- Fever PreCheck: temperature monitoring tool, immunity passport
- Density: room capacity monitoring system