

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 28, 2019

The Honorable Tim Ryan
Chair, Subcommittee on Legislative Branch
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jaime Herrera Beutler
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on
Legislative Branch
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Ryan and Ranking Member Beutler:

As you work to finalize Fiscal Year 2020 funding for the Legislative Branch, we urge the subcommittee to include \$1,000,000 in funding for the House Office of the Whistleblower Ombudsman.

As Co-Chairs of the bipartisan House Whistleblower Protection Caucus, we strive to champion the rights of whistleblowers, who risk their careers to report waste, fraud, abuse, and threats to public health and safety. Our Caucus is dedicated to protecting these individuals in order to promote good governance.

The House of Representatives took an important step earlier this year in helping whistleblowers by including a new House Office of the Whistleblower Ombudsman in the Rules Package for the 116th Congress. Under that authority, the Speaker in consultation with the Committees on House Administration and Oversight and Reform, may appoint the Whistleblower Ombudsman. The Ombudsman office will then develop best practices for House offices regarding whistleblower intake and assistance training.

Congress plays a critical role in both learning from, and protecting, whistleblowers. Additionally, our constitutionally mandated oversight work very often relies on vital disclosures from federal workers and employees within the private sector. However, when interacting with whistleblowers, some Congressional offices may mishandle whistleblower disclosures or dismiss them entirely due to lack of training. When this happens, it could inadvertently result in retaliation against a whistleblower as well as the continuation of the often fraudulent and wasteful activities that the whistleblower is attempting to illuminate.

We understand that funding in the current fiscal year will allow for the hiring of staff, as well as the establishment of a website, development of educational resources, and initial training. In order to ensure that the House Office of the Whistleblower Ombudsman is successful, continued funding for fiscal year 2020 is needed.

Therefore, we request that the subcommittee continues to support the establishment of a comprehensive House Office of the Whistleblower Ombudsman by providing \$1,000,000.00 in dedicated Fiscal Year 2020 funding through a new Legislative Branch Appropriations line item.

We also request that the subcommittee advise the Office of the Whistleblower Ombudsman to use the funds to ensure secured communications between Congress and whistleblowers through the technological development of secure communication in all Congressional offices and committees within the House of Representatives.

We appreciate your consideration of this request and again urge you to ensure that this essential funding is allocated for the benefit of the American taxpayer and in the interest of ensuring good governance.

Sincerely,



Jackie Speier
Whistleblower Protection Caucus
Co-Chair



Mark Meadows
Whistleblower Protection Caucus
Co-Chair



Kathleen Rice
Whistleblower Protection Caucus
Co-Chair