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Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-0514

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Co-Chair, Democratic Women's Caucus  
Senior Whip

May 1, 2020

J. Brett Blanton  
Architect of the Capitol  
SB-16, The Capitol Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Brian Monahan  
Attending Physician  
H-166, The Capitol Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Architect of the Capitol J. Brett Blanton and Attending Physician Brian Monahan:

I am writing to urge a review of current health and safety practices within the United States Capitol House Office Buildings, specifically as it pertains to the practice of Members sleeping in their offices. According to recent reports, 17 construction workers in the Cannon House Office Building and 12 Capitol Police Officers have tested positive for the coronavirus.<sup>[1]</sup>

We know COVID-19 is contagious yet neither Members of Congress nor staff were alerted to this information before returning to Washington, D.C. for a scheduled vote. The Architect of the Capitol (AOC) has been providing regular updates and it's deeply concerning that this information was not disclosed. If Members slept in their offices during this time, they likely had a greater chance of exposure and exacerbated the public health risk of coronavirus. This is reason enough for the AOC to review its existing health and safety policies.

Over the past several years, there have been reports of between 50 to 100 Members of Congress living in their offices.<sup>[2]</sup> I've pushed to ban this practice because it is unprofessional, unhygienic, and even unethical. It raises questions over propriety and safety if staff members come to work early and stumble upon the member in pajamas or getting dressed. The legislative office belongs to the constituents, not the member. More recently, the coronavirus demonstrates public health issues as another major reason to ban this practice. While the practice is de facto eliminated while the House is not in session, Members are expected to return to Washington, DC in the coming weeks, raising the urgency of addressing this problem.

This pandemic demonstrates how rapidly and easily viruses and other health threats can be transmitted from person-to-person. It's highly possible that other communicable diseases have been transmitted more rapidly due to Members living in their offices. House offices were never intended to become homeless shelters for Members and it is high time we stop tolerating the practice.

<sup>[1]</sup> <https://www.rollcall.com/2020/04/29/members-staff-in-the-dark-about-prevalence-of-capitol-hill-coronavirus-cases/>

<sup>[2]</sup> <https://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/politics-government/congress/article224506345.html>

As such, I urge a permanent ban on Members sleeping in their offices. I hope the Architect of the Capitol, in conjunction with the House Physician, take steps to ameliorate this situation

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jackie Speier". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

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Jackie Speier  
Member of Congress