STENY H. HOYER
DEMOCRATIC WHIP
5TH DISTRICT, MARYLAND

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515–6502

December 19, 2014

The Honorable Pete Sessions
Chairman, House Committee on Rules
U.S. House of Representatives
H-312, the Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Sessions:

As the House prepares to convene the 114th Congress, I strongly urge you and the rest of the House Republican leadership to recommend to the full House extending current employment protections in the official Rules of the House to congressional employees who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) when Members consider the rules package in January.

As you may know, the House of Representatives has no official policy prohibiting employment discrimination against House employees on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Absent such protections, LGBT employees of the House of Representatives can be denied job opportunities, summarily fired, or otherwise discriminated against solely because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Clause 9 of Rule XXIII currently provides that:

A Member, Delegate, Resident Commissioner, officer, or employee of the House may not discharge and may not refuse to hire an individual, or otherwise discriminate against an individual with respect to compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment, because of the race, color, religion, sex (including marital or parental status), disability, age, or national origin of such individual, but may take into consideration the domicile or political affiliation of such individual.

This simple change to Clause 9 of Rule XXIII, which I am asking the House Republican leadership to propose to the full House in January, will, if adopted, provide for a fair work environment while still permitting Members of Congress to take into account skill, experience, connections to the Member's state, and political affiliation.

The fundamental truth is that Democratic and Republican Members depend on LGBT Americans to carry out our duties in our House offices, our district offices, and on the committees we serve. It is ultimately in the House's own interest – and our nation's – to ensure no House employees are subject to a hostile or discriminatory workplace simply because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

DEMOCRATIC WHIP OFFICE:
H-148, THE CAPITOL
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-3130
(202) 226-0663 (FAX)
http://democraticwhip.house.gov

WASHINGTON, DC OFFICE:
1705 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-4131
(202) 225-4300 (FAX)
http://www.hoyer.house.gov

GREENBELT DISTRICT OFFICE:
U.S. DISTRICT COURT HOUSE
6500 CHERRYWOOD LANE, SUITE 310
GREENBELT, MD 20770
(301) 474-0119
(301) 474-4697 (FAX)

WALDORF DISTRICT OFFICE:
401 POST OFFICE ROAD, #202
WALDORF, MD 20602
(301) 843-1577
(301) 843-1331 (FAX)

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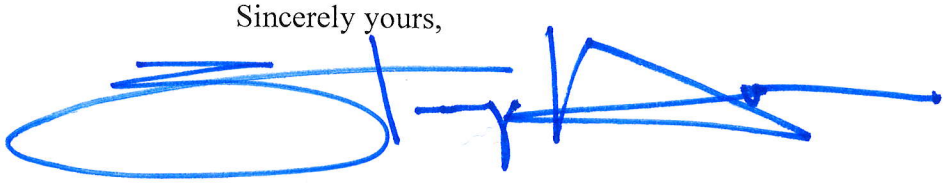
I cannot overstate my belief that the House will have missed a significant opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to basic workplace fairness if it does not make the change I propose. For this reason, it is imperative that Members have the opportunity to extend the protections articulated in Clause 9 Rule XXIII to LGBT employees when the House convenes in January.

Thank you for your attention and with kindest regards, I am

Sincerely yours,



STENY H. HOYER

c.c. Hon. John Boehner, Speaker of the House
Hon. Nancy Pelosi, House Democratic Leader
Hon. Kevin McCarthy, House Majority Leader
Hon. Louise Slaughter, Ranking Democrat, House Committee on Rules
Hon. David Cicilline
Hon. Jared Polis
Hon. Kyrsten Sinema
Hon. Sean Patrick Maloney
Hon. Mark Takano
Hon. Mark Pocan