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ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

U.S. House of Representatives

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STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRWOMAN AND RANKING MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE ON ETHICS

Pursuant to Committee Rule 7(g), the Chairwoman and Ranking Member of the Committee on Ethics (Committee) determined to release the following statement:

The Committee on Ethics takes allegations of sexual harassment and discrimination and other violations of workplace rights extremely seriously. Today, the House of Representatives passed important legislation to reform the Congressional Accountability Act (CAA), which provides workplace rights and protections to employees in the legislative branch. We have worked with our colleagues on the Committee on House Administration and other Members on this bipartisan proposal to ensure that the House and Senate ethics committees have the tools and information they need to investigate alleged violations of workplace rights and other misconduct.

In particular, the proposal would require the Office of Compliance (OOC), to be renamed Office of Workplace Rights, to refer certain matters to the House and Senate ethics committees. The proposal would also expressly mandate that when OOC refers a matter, it must also provide access to the records of any investigations, hearings, or decisions of the hearing officers and its Board, including any information relating to a settlement or award relating to a claim. In light of our recent experience seeking information from OOC, we believe these changes are necessary to clarify interactions between the ethics committees and OOC.

We have discussed this issue with the full Committee on Ethics. We believe it is clear that under the existing CAA, the House and Senate ethics committees retain jurisdiction over sexual harassment and discrimination and other violations of workplace rights. However, it is our view that it would be in the best interests of the House and public accountability to clarify when and how OOC must provide information to the Committee about allegations of misconduct. Today's action in the House is an important step toward that goal and we commend the House for passing this important legislation.

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