

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney
Committee on Oversight and Reform
Full Committee Business Meeting
Opening Statement on H.R. 7936, the Federal Employee Access to Information Act
September 16, 2020

I introduced, along with my colleague and Chairman of the Subcommittee on Government Operations, Mr. Connolly, the Federal Employee Access to Information Act to protect federal employees from retaliation for exercising their right to request information from the government under the Freedom of Information Act or the Privacy Act.

FOIA and Privacy Act requests are essential tools for the public to obtain government information and to hold the government accountable. Federal employees must be free to access such information in the same way as any other member of the public.

The Freedom of Information Act has long been a bipartisan issue in this Committee, and we have worked over the years to strengthen the right to request and obtain information from federal agencies.

Federal employees should not lose that right simply because they are working as public servants. This bill would not give federal employees any special rights to obtain information from the government. It would be triggered only if an agency took a personnel action in retaliation against an employee because the employee filed a FOIA or Privacy Act request.

I introduced this bill after being contacted by a federal employee who was concerned about a personnel action that had been taken as retribution for the employee's FOIA request. Under this bill, the law would explicitly protect against such retaliation.

It is a simple, good-government transparency improvement, and I urge every Member to support it.

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