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House of Representatives

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Ranking Member Jamie Raskin Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery “A Focus on Management: Oversight of the Office of Management and Budget” April 30, 2024

Thank you, Chairman Comer, and thank you, Deputy Director Miller, for your testimony today. The Office of Management and Budget sets the policies that guide executive branch agencies on how to spend the money Congress appropriates. It's OMB that turns Biden-Harris Administration policy priorities into direct service of our constituents and our communities.

What we're talking about today is the essential mechanics of how the federal government works and how it should work: how to ensure that government services reach *all* eligible recipients; how to prevent, detect, and reduce *improper* access to federal programs; and how to recruit—and ensure the safety of—the two million-plus people across this nation who comprise the largest and most diversely talented and skilled workforce in the country.

Under the Biden-Harris Administration, OMB has made excellent strides in modernizing and revitalizing a federal government that was gutted after four years of the deliberate undermining and mismanagement of the federal workforce by Donald Trump. When he was in office, Donald Trump used OMB not as the transmission belt for getting government services to the people, but as the instrument for executing personal political vendettas against designated enemies and the public sector workforce as a whole.

As Deputy Director Miller affirms in his testimony, OMB today is using data and feedback from stakeholders across America to ensure that its guidance is always rooted in facts and the demands of pragmatic public policy, not ideological litmus tests and political loyalty tests.

OMB's guidance and policies today are transforming how Americans interact with our government. OMB is improving how our communities access federal funding, including grants, cooperative agreements, and loans. OMB is ensuring that federal agencies use artificial intelligence ethically and equitably. OMB is setting excellent government-wide policies on recruiting and retaining a highly-qualified federal workforce to deliver for the American people.

Federal workers provide medical care to veterans, they respond to natural disasters, and they ensure the safety of the nation's food supply. They show up every day to provide essential services to their communities. And OMB is transforming the way the federal workforce thinks about serving the American people and improving access to vital government programs and services.

Here's a great example of the kind of government innovation that's taking place in this administration. The Internal Revenue Service has launched the incredibly successful Direct File pilot, which allows qualifying

taxpayers in several states to easily and quickly file their taxes directly with the IRS at no cost. The trick is that the IRS guides you through filling out your Form 1040 with all your basic W-2 information, which is the major income that most people have to report. Taxpayers with additional questions about Direct File could access customer service representatives for help. In other words, the government acts as your tax preparer. People should not have to pay exorbitant fees to private companies for help filing a straightforward tax return. OMB is leading other similar government-wide efforts to reduce the cost and frustration that can come with engagement with the government.

Another critical way that individuals, businesses, and communities across America interact with our government is through the federal grants process. [In fiscal year 2024](#) thus far, for example, state and local government entities, nonprofits, and local businesses in Texas received more than \$29 billion dollars in grants just from the Department of Health and Human Services. Also in FY2024 to date, Kentucky's constituents have received nearly \$12 billion in grant awards from HHS.

Despite these investments, the reporting requirements and the complicated process required to secure federal funding slowed down access and innovation—and kept many communities from securing critical funding. But OMB's updated guidance puts grant applicants, the people who we are elected to serve, in the driver's seat and adapts the capabilities of today's technology and modern-day constituent expectations.

When OMB announced this new guidance last month, the chief of the Division of Fiscal Management for Montgomery County, Maryland, spoke at the event and said “plain language, accessible information and reduction in burdensome closeout requirements allows for those of us in local government to have broader and clearer conversations on grant implementation through our organizations.”

As I'm sure my esteemed colleague, Mr. Comer can confirm, residents from the great Commonwealth of Kentucky have also appreciated and lauded this new guidance. In the comment process for this new guidance, a consultant from Fort Knox, Kentucky who helps museums, zoos, parks and other cultural centers thrive, commented that the new guidance “would reduce the burdens placed on nonprofits” allowing them to “devote energies more toward doing the work that directly fulfills their missions and serves their communities.”

[The National Council of Nonprofits said](#) the OMB's new guidance is “needed and welcomed by the nonprofit community,” particularly the improvements that reduce administrative burdens and require agencies to use plain language in their grant opportunities. Other nonprofit organizations welcomed OMB's updated guidance, noting it provides “a level of clarity and directness necessary for states and localities to act with confidence.”

I look forward to hearing more today about how OMB has modernized and upgraded its grants guidance to simplify the process, reduce compliance costs for recipients, and create opportunities for underserved communities to access the help they need.

I also look forward to hearing from Deputy Director Miller about how we can work together to make federal programs even more effective by preventing fraud in federal spending. Earlier this month, I was proud to introduce the [Government Spending Oversight Act of 2024](#) (H.R. 8009) which would make more permanent the inspector general community's ability to identify and combat fraud in federal programs.

Also very importantly, I want to highlight the vital role that a nonpartisan, merit-based federal workforce plays in this nation. President Trump's authoritarian Schedule F proposal would remove experts and replace them with an army of sycophants and party hacks—and that proposal would

disproportionately affect OMB's workforce. Under Trump's plan, nearly 70% of our non-political workforce could have been fired because they did their jobs and followed their oath to defend the Constitution. Although President Biden has taken steps to prevent a future attack on our civil service, we cannot forget that an expert and nonpartisan federal workforce is essential to a functioning government and a thriving pluralistic democracy.

With that, I look forward to hearing testimony this morning from Deputy Director Miller on OMB's important work.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

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