

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 6, 2025

Leland Dudek
Acting Commissioner
Social Security Administration
6401 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21235

Acting Commissioner Dudek:

We write to express our strong concern over the Social Security Administration's (SSA) reckless actions to shutter offices, slash SSA's workforce, and close field offices across the country.¹ These draconian cuts to SSA will have a devastating toll on Americans' ability to access their earned benefits. Additionally, they seem to have been made with no consideration for their impact on the agency's ability to achieve its mission.

Nearly every American interacts with SSA at certain points in our lives, particularly during significant moments like a birth and adoption; marriage and divorce; onset of a life-altering disability; retirement from work; or the death of a spouse. SSA employees help seniors enroll into Medicare, help Americans determine when to retire and file for Social Security benefits, and help Americans file for disability benefits. Access to in-person services is especially important for people who have difficulty speaking by phone, who do not have reliable internet access, and people who have difficulty understanding program rules. Every day, over 120,000 people visit and 233,000 call SSA's field offices, on average. In Fiscal Year 2024 alone, SSA processed over 8 million Social Security benefit claims, 1.4 million Supplemental Security Income (SSI) claims, and received over 57 million calls to their field offices and nearly 80 million calls through SSA's 1-800 Number.

As one of the nation's most popular and effective programs, Social Security provides a foundation of income on which workers can build for their retirement, as well as valuable insurance protection against unexpected hardship. By slashing staff and eliminating field offices, fewer Americans will be able to seek assistance during pivotal life events and risk causing further hardship to those in dire circumstances.

The agency's brash decision defies the President's pledge to not touch Social Security and the Administration's policies. In the Office on Management and Budget and Office of Personnel Management joint memo about slashing the federal workforce, there are references to ensuring that any workforce reductions at Social Security will have a positive effect on the delivery of services.² Based on the rash actions to date, we have serious concerns that the administration

¹ <https://apnews.com/article/social-security-layoffs-doge-musk-trump-93efbed33957af5ec8ac37744d0592de>

² <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/latest-memos/guidance-on-agency-rif-and-reorganization-plans->

takes this assurance and commitment seriously. Empirical evidence and basic common sense shows that further reducing staff and field offices will have a substantial adverse impact on Americans' ability to access Social Security benefits. A 2017 academic study found field office closures lead to "large and persistent reductions" in the number of applications and receipt of disability benefits, which are more acutely felt among those with severe physical and mental disabilities, low income, and those without a college degree.³ Similarly, a 2020 Social Security Advisory Board report found that a two-year long hiring freeze and reduction in field office operating hours resulted in higher congestion in the field offices, with the number of visitors waiting over an hour increased by 78 percent and the average wait time increased 37 percent to 24.9 minutes.⁴ Simply put, making it more cumbersome to access Social Security does not make the program more efficient nor does it improve customer service. The administration hasn't even provided estimates of what the changes it has already taken credit for will mean for customer services and key workloads.

Your characterization of its recent reorganizations and staffing reductions as "duplicative," "redundant" or "non-mission critical" is an utter farce and insulting to the thousands of Americans who dedicated their career in service of the agency's mission. These public servants worked on critical projects focusing on improving customer service for all its customers, reducing waste, fraud, and abuse, and ensuring that all Americans, particularly those with disabilities, can access SSA offices and their earned benefits. Moreover, eliminating those staff does not eliminate their work. Driving staff out of the agency and forcing the remaining staff to complete more work is a recipe for burnout, low morale, and worse productivity.

Despite your stated commitment to transparency, the agency's decision to strip down SSA while keeping Members of Congress, community leaders, advocates, and the public in the dark undermine the agency's own stated policy and best practices. As you know, even subtle changes to SSA's service delivery can cause significant disruptions to its customers. SSA must take care to ensure that community leaders and stakeholders are consulted so service to the public continues in the most effective, efficient, and caring way possible. The only explanation that can justify SSA's actions is to appease the President and Elon Musk in their crusade to dismantle the federal government. Musk made his views towards Social Security clear when he called the program "the biggest Ponzi scheme of all time."

We urge you to cease any activities that threaten Americans' Social Security benefits. To understand the agency's recent actions, please detail the steps SSA took to ensure customer service remains uninterrupted for the millions of Americans no later than March 12, 2025. This should include:

[requested-by-implementing-the-president-s-department-of-government-efficiency-workforce-optimization-initiative.pdf](#).

³ <http://www.nber.org/papers/w23472>.

⁴ <https://www.ssab.gov/research/field-office-closures/>

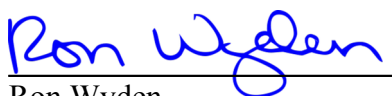
1. Any and all qualitative and quantitative analyses conducted to evaluate the impact of these changes on SSA's ability to administer the programs and on SSA's customers since January 20, 2025;
2. A report detailing how:
 - a. Reduced staff in the regional offices would improve customer service;
 - b. Reduced staff in field offices would improve customer service;
 - c. Reduced staff in state disability determination services would improve customer service;
 - d. Reduced staff in hearings offices would improve customer service;
 - e. Reduced staff in appeals councils would improve customer service;
 - f. Reduced staff in Social Security Card Centers would improve customer service;
 - g. Reduced staff in teleservice centers would improve customer service;
 - h. Reduced staff in program centers would improve customer service;
3. A report explaining how driving out experienced SSA employees with at least 20 years of experience would improve customer service;

For the decision to consolidate ten regional offices into four, please also provide:

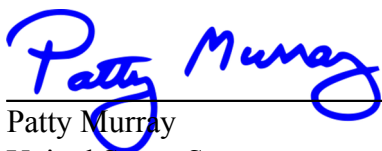
1. The number of SSA employees working when the regional office closed and their responsibilities;
2. The percentage of SSA employees in the regional office who were terminated, resigned, or retired;
3. The number of claims or post-entitlement actions that were pending in the regional office at the time of closure, and how SSA will ensure those pending cases are timely addressed;
4. The list of evaluating factors or criteria SSA considered in determining to close the regional office.
5. A list of all community outreach meetings SSA conducted with key community leaders (e.g., mayor, city council, etc.), unique institutions (e.g., schools for the blind, hospitals, prisons, etc.), advocacy groups, community-based organizations that represent SSA clients, employees and labor groups about the proposed closure, consolidation, or relocation of the affected office since January 20, 2025;
6. Whether you or other senior SSA officials conducted any outreach with Members of Congress and U.S. Senators and/or their staff who represent the affected regional office about the proposed closure prior to your February 28 announcement.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Committee
on Finance



Patty Murray
United States Senator



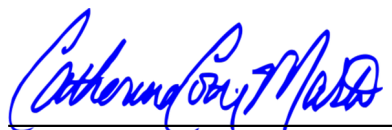
Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Peter Welch
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



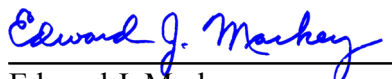
Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



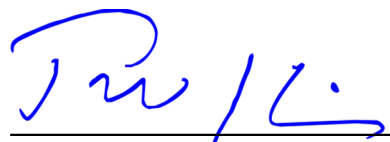
Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



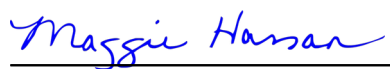
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Lisa Blunt Rochester
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Ruben Gallego
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



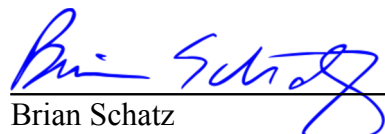
Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



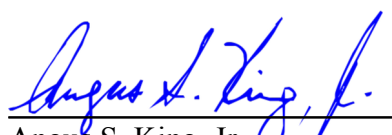
Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



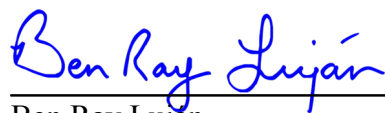
Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



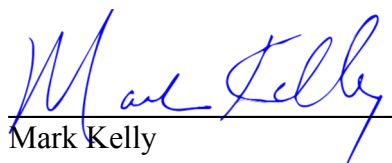
Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Mark Kelly
United States Senator



Angela Alsobrooks
United States Senator



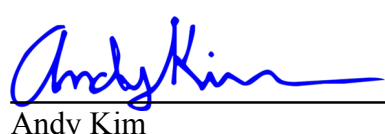
Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



Jon Ossoff
United States Senator



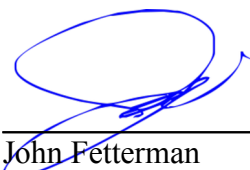
Andy Kim
United States Senator



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



Elissa Slotkin
United States Senator



John Fetterman
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator