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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6025

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EVAN T. SCHATZ, STAFF DIRECTOR
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May 21, 2024

The Honorable Martin O'Malley
Commissioner
Social Security Administration
6401 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21235

Dear Commissioner O'Malley:

We write to express concern regarding your decision to close all Social Security Administration (SSA) offices at noon on May 10 and May 24 in honor of "Public Service Recognition Week." Like you, we value the contributions of public servants, but displays of employee appreciation should not come at the expense of beneficiary access to SSA services.

SSA plays a crucial role in ensuring that our nation's retired workers and most vulnerable populations have timely access to the benefits to which they are entitled. SSA abdicated its core function of service to the public by undertaking this sweeping operational change with little notice and accommodation for beneficiaries.

On the afternoon of May 8, SSA staff notified staff of the Senate Appropriations Committee that you had announced that you were providing "all SSA employees with several hours of administrative leave in honor of Public Service Recognition Week. This means that all of our offices will close for the day at noon on Friday, May 10 and Friday, May 24 in their respective time zones."

To ensure that the Committee understands the impacts of this decision on beneficiary services as well as the associated costs, we respectfully request that you respond to the following questions by May 28, 2024:

- Which stakeholders, if any, did SSA consult with in the process of planning these closures?
- What precedent, if any, did SSA rely upon for granting such sweeping administrative leave and shuttering major operations to honor a non-federal holiday?
- Did SSA establish formal policies and procedures for outreach to beneficiaries affected by the closures? If so, please provide the applicable policies and procedures.
- When did SSA begin to conduct outreach and notification to beneficiaries regarding the planned closures? Please describe the methods and contents of any applicable outreach materials.

- Is SSA tracking how many appointments and services have been compromised or foregone as a result of these closures? If yes, please provide the total number of appointments affected.
- Have the closures resulted in, or are they expected to result in, any negative implications for SSA's monthly operational metrics as reported to the Committee on Appropriations? If so, please specify which metrics and the anticipated magnitude of changes.
- SSA's discretionary administrative budget for non-program integrity operating activities totals \$12.2 billion in fiscal year 2024. This provides SSA with an average rate of daily operations of over \$47 million per work day, much of which is for fixed costs. What is SSA's estimate for the amount of administrative obligations incurred and expenditures made during these periods of time when most services were unavailable to the public?

We appreciate your prompt attention to the matter.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
Vice Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate