

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 8, 2025

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

Dear Acting Commissioner Dudek:

We write to denounce the incessant havoc sparked by the Trump Administration's continual cuts to the Social Security Administration (SSA). Changes implemented by SSA leadership and the so-called "Department of Government Efficiency" (DOGE) include heinous staffing cuts, plans for indiscriminate closures of field offices around the nation, and limits to phone services.¹ It is difficult to see how DOGE's attacks on the SSA, and the complicity shown by SSA leadership, will improve efficiency when we are already hearing stories upon stories of how SSA's changes have damaged the system responsible for ensuring timely, accurate payments—upending the lives of older adults and people with disabilities who rely on Social Security benefits that they **earned** to pay their rent, groceries, and medical bills.

Social Security lifts 22 million Americans, including 16 million older adults, out of poverty.² Many older adults rely on Social Security for life-saving sustenance—to ensure they have food to eat, a roof over their heads, and money to pay for medications. In fact, 40 percent of older Americans rely on Social Security as their only source of retirement income.³ Over seven million veterans received a Social Security benefit in 2024,⁴ while SSDI and Supplemental Security Income serve millions of workers with disabilities and their children.⁵ DOGE's attacks on the SSA will break down access to services, affect timely and accurate payment of benefits,⁶ and have disastrous consequences for Americans everywhere.

It is precisely because older adults, people with disabilities, and other deserving Americans count on Social Security that we are deeply concerned with efforts by DOGE and SSA leadership to impede access to SSA services. SSA has announced plans to slash at least 12 percent of its workforce, and offered a buyout incentives to staff, at a time when SSA staffing is at a 50-year low.⁷ SSA has also announced plans to close six of its ten regional offices, which coordinate and support the efforts of SSA employees.⁸ DOGE, meanwhile, has placed dozens of SSA offices

¹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/03/18/social-security-musk-trump-doge/>

² <https://www.cbpp.org/research/social-security/social-security-lifts-more-people-above-the-poverty-line-than-any-other>

³ <https://www.nirsonline.org/reports/examining-the-nest-egg/>

⁴ <https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/population-profiles/veteran-beneficiaries.html>

⁵ https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/quickfacts/stat_snapshot/

⁶ <https://www.cnbc.com/2025/03/01/doge-actions-may-cause-social-security-benefit-interruption-ex-agency-head.html>

⁷ <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/17/business/social-security-doge-ssa.html>

⁸ <https://blog.ssa.gov/social-security-announces-workforce-and-organization-plans/>

across the country on the chopping block.⁹ At the same time, SSA has decided to limit the services it makes available over-the-phone, after backing down from broader restrictions following an outcry by older adults and people with disabilities.¹⁰ SSA's new limits on over-the-phone services are still unacceptable, and the process used by SSA—swift revisions after public outcry—suggest the agency is *not* talking to the Americans who rely on Social Security the most *before* it makes its decisions. Instead, it appears that SSA leadership is pushing out half-baked ideas that lead to public confusion and panic.

SSA leadership should strive to serve the public, *not* Elon Musk and his cronies with the DOGE. We are already witnessing the consequences of SSA's complicity in DOGE's irresponsible actions and cruel intentions. Scammers have taken advantage of the confusion surrounding SSA changes to defraud older adults.¹¹ The SSA website crashed 4 times in 10 days because servers were overloaded; phone wait time and foot traffic to field offices have skyrocketed.¹² This chaos does not create "efficiency." It harms older adults and people with disabilities while undermining a program that is *already* efficient: Even as Social Security uplifts millions of older adults and people with disabilities, less than one percent of Social Security payments are improper—a percentage that includes underpayments as well as overpayments.¹³

We are pleased that Elon Musk, the world's richest man, is skilled with technology, lives his life with unfettered access to services, and has not experienced what it is like to live with a severe disability or financial hardship. We are also pleased that the Trump Administration's supposed "leadership" is comfortable enough to believe older adults will not mind a missed Social Security payment.¹⁴ However, their experiences do *not* reflect the experiences of millions of Americans who rely on Social Security. The changes undertaken by SSA leadership and the DOGE disregard the reality of daily life for those millions of Americans. They are spearheaded by the out-of-touch, unelected leadership of the DOGE. They hurt our nation's older adults and people with disabilities—our grandparents, our friends, and our neighbors. And they risk debilitating the Social Security System and denying Americans the money they are owed.

In light of our concerns, we ask that you answer the following questions:

1. Reports indicate that an internal memo proposing changes to the Social Security claims process was circulated within SSA on March 13, 2025.¹⁵ The memo also reportedly details how the changes could significantly impact the ability of Social Security recipients to access their benefits, including through "longer wait times and processing time" and "increased challenges for vulnerable populations."¹⁶ Please provide:

⁹ <https://apnews.com/article/social-security-offices-closures-doge-trump-b2b1a5b2ba4fb968abc3379bf90715ff>; <https://doge.gov/savings>

¹⁰ <https://www.ssa.gov/news/press/releases/2025/#2025-03-26>

¹¹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/03/25/social-security-phones-doge-cuts/>

¹² <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/03/25/social-security-phones-doge-cuts/>

¹³ <https://oig.ssa.gov/assets/uploads/072401.pdf> at background.

¹⁴ <https://www.axios.com/2025/03/21/social-security-lutnick-doge-checks>

¹⁵ <https://popular.info/p/exclusive-memo-details-trump-plan>

¹⁶ <https://popular.info/p/exclusive-memo-details-trump-plan>

- a. An unredacted copy of the March 13, 2025 memo, which was sent from Acting Deputy Commissioner Doris Diaz to Acting Commissioner Leland Dudek;
 - b. Copies of any other written communications that are related to the March 13, 2025 memo, including e-mail, texts, letters, memorandums, or other documents; and
 - c. Copies of any written communications, including e-mail, texts, letters, memorandums, or other documents, related to SSA's decision to revise its changes to phone services, as announced on March 26, 2025.¹⁷
2. SSA's new limitations on over-the-phone services are likely to increase the number of visitors per-week to SSA field offices, a potential impact reportedly detailed by SSA leadership in its March 13, 2025 memo.¹⁸ The DOGE website lists numerous SSA offices throughout the United States that will have their lease terminated,¹⁹ and one analysis suggests that 47 SSA offices are slated for closure.²⁰

Please answer the following questions about potential SSA field office closures:

- a. SSA claims in a press release on March 27th that the SSA "has not permanently closed or announced permanent closure of any local field office."²¹ Public reporting shows that multiple SSA field offices across the country were publicly slated for lease termination, many of which were taken off DOGE's website prior to the press release.²²
 - i. Explain the reason for the removal of the field offices previously listed for lease termination on the DOGE website.
 - ii. Explain why the SSA did not issue a public correction of the information provided on SSA lease termination after its removal off the DOGE website.
- b. Provide detailed information on each location on the DOGE and GSA lease termination lists that include an SSA office, including any locations that include an SSA field office but are leased by other federal departments, such as the General Services Administration. Please include the following information for each location:
 - i. What SSA functions operate out of the location, whether the location is open to the public, what services the location provides to the public, and how many members of the public visit the location each day.
 - ii. How the SSA office will be impacted by the lease termination listed on the DOGE website, including which services at the SSA office will cease to be offered to the public and whether the SSA office will be closed entirely.

¹⁷ <https://www.ssa.gov/news/press/releases/2025/#2025-03-26>

¹⁸ <https://popular.info/p/exclusive-memo-details-trump-plan>

¹⁹ <https://doge.gov/savings>; <https://www.cnbc.com/2025/03/01/doge-actions-may-cause-social-security-benefit-interruption-ex-agency-head.html>

²⁰ <https://apnews.com/article/social-security-offices-closures-doge-trump-b2b1a5b2ba4fb968abc3379bf90715ff>

²¹ <https://www.ssa.gov/news/press/releases/2025/#2025-03-27-a>

²² <https://popular.info/p/how-the-social-security-administration-fff>

- c. Which field offices is SSA planning to close, or considering for closure, through December 31, 2026, regardless of whether the location appears on the DOGE lease termination list? Please provide a detailed list that includes the name, city, and state of each field office.
 - d. How will SSA analyze the impact of potential field office closures on people who use SSA services in light of SSA's new limitations on over-the-phone services? If SSA does not plan to include the new limitations on over-the-phone services when analyzing potential field office closures, please explain why.
3. SSA's new limitations on over-the-phone services are likely to drive more people to use the SSA website, including "my Social Security" accounts, when filing for benefits or making changes to their payments. Past oversight conducted by the Senate Aging Committee demonstrated that federal departments and agencies often fail to make their websites fully accessible for people with disabilities, as required by law.²³ Further, the unelected billionaire running DOGE demonstrated his callous disregard for people with disabilities when he decimated Twitter's accessibility team after taking over the company.²⁴
- a. How many staff held a role in ensuring SSA website accessibility for people with disabilities on January 20, 2025?
 - b. How many staff held a role in ensuring SSA website accessibility for people with disabilities on April 8, 2025?
 - c. How many staff with a role in ensuring SSA website accessibility for people with disabilities were fired or accepted a buyout between January 20, 2025 and April 8, 2025?
 - d. How many contracts related to ensuring SSA website accessibility for people with disabilities have been delayed or cancelled since January 20, 2025? Please describe each delayed or cancelled contract and provide a justification for each delay or cancellation.
 - e. How many tests to evaluate SSA websites for accessibility for people with disabilities have been delayed or cancelled since January 20, 2025? Please provide a justification for each delayed or cancelled accessibility test.
4. Please describe how SSA consulted with older adults and people with disabilities before making the initial decision, announced on March 18, 2025, to implement new limits to over-the-phone services.²⁵ Please include the names of groups representing older adults and people with disabilities that were contacted for feedback. If SSA did not conduct this outreach, please explain why.

²³ https://www.aging.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/unlocking_the_virtual_front_door_-_full_report.pdf

²⁴ <https://www.wired.com/story/twitter-layoffs-accessibility/>

²⁵ <https://www.ssa.gov/news/press/releases/2025/#2025-03-18>

5. Please describe how SSA will collect feedback from older adults and people with disabilities on the impact of its limits to over-the-phone services once those limits have been implemented, including:
- a. The groups representing older adults and people with disabilities that SSA will work with to collect feedback; and
 - b. The number of in-person meetings, virtual meetings, and town-hall style meetings related to the limits on over-the-phone services that SSA will conduct through December 31, 2026, the planned locations of those events, and plans by SSA leadership to participate in those events and answer questions.

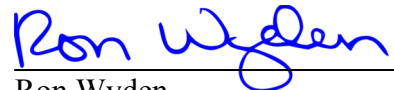
If SSA does not plan to collect feedback from older adults and people with disabilities in this fashion, please explain why.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please respond by April 22, 2025.

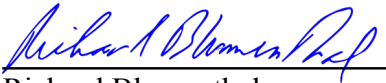
Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



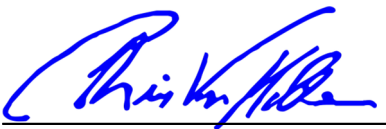
Elissa Slotkin
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



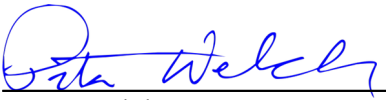
Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



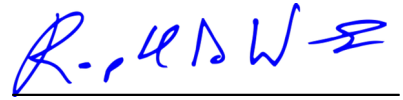
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



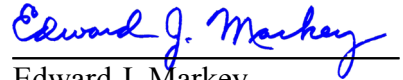
Peter Welch
United States Senator



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



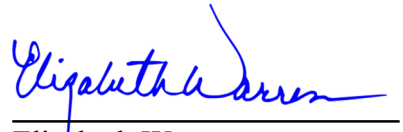
Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Ruben Gallego
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



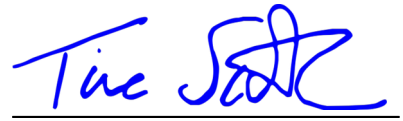
Angela Alsobrooks
United States Senator



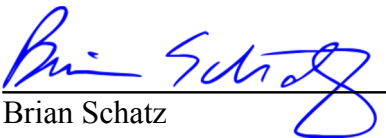
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator