

May 22, 2025

The Honorable Frank Bisignano
Commissioner
Social Security Administration
6401 Security Blvd.
Baltimore, MD 21235

Dear Commissioner Bisignano,

In light of recent indications that the Social Security Administration (SSA) is unable to get Social Security recipients their benefits on time because of inadequate staffing levels,¹ I write to remind you of the commitment you made—under oath, before the Senate Finance Committee—to appropriately staff SSA.²

Since President Trump's first day in office, the administration has worked to undermine SSA at every turn. SSA—at the direction of the Department of Governmental Efficiency (DOGE)—has closed offices, reduced phone services, and introduced website changes that have led to recurring service outages.³ Perhaps most concerning of all is SSA's announcement in February of plans to cut roughly 7,000 employees—comprising about 12 percent of SSA's workforce.⁴ Some reports indicated that SSA was considering cutting up to 50 percent of its staff.⁵ Taken together, I remain concerned that these efforts to hollow out SSA are a backdoor means of cutting benefits.

¹ HuffPost, "After Layoffs, Social Security Asks Remaining Employees To Work 10% Harder," Arthur Delaney, May 15, 2025, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/social-security-claims-backlog_n_6824fca8e4b07f898ef48307/amp.

² Office of U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, "After Pressure From Warren, Social Security Nominee Commits To Meet Staffing Needs and Protect Social Security Benefits," press release, March 25, 2025, <https://www.warren.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/after-pressure-from-warren-social-security-nominee-commits-to-meet-staffing-needs-and-protect-social-security-benefits>.

³ Letter from Senator Elizabeth Warren to Social Security Administration Acting Inspector General for Audit Michelle L. Anderson, April 22, 2025, <https://www.democrats.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Letter%20to%20SSA%20OIG%20re.%20Customer%20Service%20Final.pdf>; Letter from Senator Warren to Social Security Administration Acting Commissioner Leland Dudek, April 13, 2025, https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/letter_to_ssa_on_ocio_layoffs.pdf.

⁴ New York Times, "Social Security Administration to Cut Roughly 7,000 Workers," Tara Siegel Bernard, February 28, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/28/business/social-security-administration-job-cuts.html>.

⁵ American Prospect, "'Significant Workforce Reductions' Under Way at Social Security Administration," David Dayen, February 27, 2025, <https://prospect.org/health/2025-02-27-significant-workforce-reductions-social-security-administration>.

In light of these developments, I asked you during your nomination hearing to commit to keeping enough SSA staff to ensure that Americans get their Social Security checks, and that they get them on time. You made this commitment, and I promised I would hold you to it.⁶

Recent reporting indicates that—just two weeks into the job—you are not upholding this promise, and that SSA has a massive backlog of benefit claims.⁷ Americans have earned these benefits and deserve to receive them as soon as they are eligible. But SSA leadership recently sent an email to all operations department employees noting that there are nearly 575,000 pending claims, with a backlog that continues to grow.⁸ Of these pending claims, approximately 140,000 are over 60 days old.⁹ And recently obtained internal documents reported that benefit claim processing had slowed by 25 percent.¹⁰ Instead of acknowledging the need for additional staffing, SSA leadership directed employees who review these claims—already overworked in the wake of DOGE’s mass reductions in force—to “sprint” to increase their pace by 10 percent.¹¹

SSA is already struggling to get Americans their benefits, and I am concerned that these staffing cuts are just the beginning. Just a few weeks ago, then-Acting Commissioner Leland Dudek instructed staff to remove civil service protections for thousands of frontline SSA employees, laying the groundwork for further layoffs and staffing cuts.¹² This includes employees who review benefit claims—the same ones who have since been asked to “sprint” to make up for staffing shortages.¹³

Commissioner, you “commit[ed] to have the right staffing to get the job done,” but it is already becoming clear that current staffing levels are not, in fact, getting the job done.¹⁴ Staff shortages mean longer waits, more mistakes, and more instances in which hard-working Americans wait for weeks or months to get the benefits to which they are entitled. As a practical matter, this is a benefits cut. I urge you to halt any further layoffs and consider steps to build the workforce back up.

⁶ Office of U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, “After Pressure From Warren, Social Security Nominee Commits To Meet Staffing Needs and Protect Social Security Benefits,” press release, March 25, 2025, <https://www.warren.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/after-pressure-from-warren-social-security-nominee-commits-to-meet-staffing-needs-and-protect-social-security-benefits>.

⁷ HuffPost, “After Layoffs, Social Security Asks Remaining Employees To Work 10% Harder,” Arthur Delaney, May 15, 2025, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/social-security-claims-backlog_n_6824fca8e4b07f898ef48307/amp.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ NextGov, “DOGE went looking for phone fraud as SSA – and found almost none,” Natalie Alms, May 15, 2025, <https://www.nextgov.com/digital-government/2025/05/doge-went-looking-phone-fraud-ssa-and-found-almost-none/405346>.

¹¹ HuffPost, “After Layoffs, Social Security Asks Remaining Employees To Work 10% Harder,” Arthur Delaney, May 15, 2025, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/social-security-claims-backlog_n_6824fca8e4b07f898ef48307/amp.

¹² Government Executive, “Dudek calls for entire SSA offices to be converted to new Schedule F,” Erich Wagner, April 22, 2025, <https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2025/04/dudek-calls-entire-ssa-offices-be-converted-new-schedule-f/404755>.

¹³ HuffPost, “After Layoffs, Social Security Asks Remaining Employees To Work 10% Harder,” Arthur Delaney, May 15, 2025, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/social-security-claims-backlog_n_6824fca8e4b07f898ef48307/amp.


¹⁴ Office of U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, “After Pressure From Warren, Social Security Nominee Commits To Meet Staffing Needs and Protect Social Security Benefits,” press release, March 25, 2025, <https://www.warren.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/after-pressure-from-warren-social-security-nominee-commits-to-meet-staffing-needs-and-protect-social-security-benefits>.

I also ask that you provide answers to the following questions no later than June 5, 2025:

1. How many benefit claims were processed daily prior to January 21, 2025?
2. How many benefit claims are processed daily now?
3. How many benefit claims have been processed each week since January 21, 2025?
4. How many benefit claims have been processed since you have been confirmed?
5. What was the backlog of retirement claims on January 21, 2025?
6. What analysis have you completed to determine the capacity of employees of the operations department?
 - a. If yes, what did you determine?
 - b. How many operations employees were there prior to January 21, 2025?
 - c. How many operations employees are there now? Please do not include employees who have elected to take deferred resignation or retirement.
 - d. Do operations employees have the capacity to increase their output by 10%?
7. Will you commit to reversing any agency policies—such as layoffs or office closures—that result in delays in processing benefits?

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator