

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 15, 2026

Frank Bisignano
Commissioner
Social Security Administration
6401 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21235

Dear Commissioner Bisignano:

We write regarding new reports that, as a result of your drastic staffing cuts and shortsighted staff reassignments, the Social Security Administration (SSA)'s customer service crisis has reached new extremes.¹ These reports, some of which have come directly from SSA employees, indicate that the reassignments and the failure to prepare staff for their new roles have drained field offices of expertise and knowledge, prolonged backlogs, and left the agency unable to fully serve the nearly 75 million Americans receiving Social Security.² We write to request information on your attempts to reorganize SSA and whether it is putting Americans' access to their benefits at risk.

The Trump Administration's cuts at SSA have had a catastrophic impact. The Administration has slashed the agency's workforce by over 7,000 employees – forcing some rural field offices to close.³ At the same time, SSA is reorganizing field offices in an effort to eliminate 15 million in-person field office visits,⁴ forcing seniors and people with disabilities to wait even longer for an appointment or call the 1-800 Number and wait hours to speak with a live agent.⁵ But instead of fixing these problems, you have attempted to paper over the mess by soliciting federal contracts to deploy self-service kiosks⁶ and shifting employees around to prop up your embattled 1-800 number and pad your cherry-picked customer service metrics.

¹ Government Executive, "Social Security is directing employees who normally process benefits to answer phones instead," Natalie Alms and Eric Katz, February 6, 2026, <https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2026/02/social-security-directing-employees-who-normally-process-benefits-answer-phones-instead/411253/>; Center for American Progress, "The Social Security Administration Is Bleeding Staff," Molly Weston Williamson, January 30, 2026, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-social-security-administration-is-bleeding-staff/>.

² *Id.*

³ Center for American Progress, "The Social Security Administration Is Bleeding Staff," Molly Weston Williamson, January 30, 2026, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-social-security-administration-is-bleeding-staff/>.

⁴ NextGov/FCW, "Social Security wants about 15 million fewer visits in its field offices," Natalie Alms, December 1, 2025, <https://www.nextgov.com/digital-government/2025/12/social-security-wants-about-15-million-fewer-visits-field-offices/409850/>.

⁵ Washington Post, "Callers to Social Security wait for hours to get help. Hear their ordeals.," Meryl Kornfield and Hannah Natanson, October 28, 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/interactive/2025/social-security-wait-hold-callback/>.

⁶ Government Accountability Office, "SSKiosk RFI. Request for Information to gather ven," March 2, 2026, <https://sam.gov/workspace/contract/opp/85b3748eee354eebbe8ad23b26d8a6e5/view>.

SSA has Pulled Hundreds of Employees from SSA Field Offices

In early February, reporting revealed that you pulled employees away from SSA’s “disability adjudication, financial and management, field office services, risk and quality, digital services and chief information officer units” to help answer SSA’s national phone line.⁷ This move is just the latest in a string of reassignments and details that have left field offices and processing centers drained and put Americans’ benefits in peril. Last month, for example, SSA moved around 800 employees from its “processing centers, field office support units, and workload support units” to the national phone line.⁸ These employees are “benefits authorizers, claims authorizers and post-entitlement technical experts,” who help older and disabled Americans receive their benefits by “process[ing] claims and appeals.”⁹ In December, SSA shifted 500 more field office employees to answering the phones after reassigning thousands in July.¹⁰

Despite SSA’s claims that shifting employees ensures the agency operates at “peak efficiency,”¹¹ these reassignments will do the opposite. As one reassigned employee said, “we [are] being forced away from the backlog of appeals and cases and forced onto the phones to take calls from people wondering what the status of their claim is and where their back benefits are... We are the workers who process the claims they are waiting for.”¹² This counterproductive action is akin to a restaurant manager firing its entire wait staff and forcing its cooks to wait tables as well. At the same time, SSA has opened applications to hire call service representatives, in what appears to be an attempt to refill the positions you cut.¹³ This entire process of firing and pushing out call service staff, re-assigning other employees to serve as call center staff, and now rehiring a whole new set of inexperienced call service staff, is the opposite of government efficiency – it is a costly, wasteful process that only adds to the customer service chaos.

SSA is Reassigning Employees with Minimal Training

Your reassigned employees are being moved with barely any training, forcing them to go from more technical positions to customer-facing roles with only days’ notice. Reassigned employees are reportedly only receiving three hours of training before starting on the 1-800 phone line, despite the agency claiming they would receive eight hours of training.¹⁴ Regardless, employees familiar with handling the phone line say that “even [eight hours] of training” is “insufficient due to the complexity of issues that can arise on a call.”¹⁵ Typically, new employees received 16

⁷ Government Executive, “Social Security is directing employees who normally process benefits to answer phones instead,” Natalie Alms and Eric Katz, February 6, 2026, <https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2026/02/social-security-directing-employees-who-normally-process-benefits-answer-phones-instead/411253/>.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.*; Center on budget and Policy Priorities, “Reassignment Won’t Fix the Largest Ever Social Security Staffing Cut,” Kathleen Romig and Devin O’Connor, June 23, 2025, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/social-security/reassignment-wont-fix-the-largest-ever-social-security-staffing-cut>.

¹¹ Government Executive, “Social Security is directing employees who normally process benefits to answer phones instead,” Natalie Alms and Eric Katz, February 6, 2026, <https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2026/02/social-security-directing-employees-who-normally-process-benefits-answer-phones-instead/411253/>.

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ *Id.*

weeks of training before they begin answering live calls.¹⁶ Unsurprisingly, employees who have already been reassigned are facing challenges due to their lack of preparation for their new position, reporting that “the calls just in the first week have become more complex than those for which they were trained.”¹⁷

The impacts of this lack of training are already becoming apparent – with literal life and death consequences. Newly reassigned employees have reported that they are receiving alarming guidance on handling callers expressing suicidal thoughts.¹⁸ During this training, an animated instructor purportedly told employees to “remind [the caller] that suicide is only one option,” and “that there is no urgency to make any decisions.”¹⁹ Employees at one training reported “disbelief” about this guidance, and experts in crisis counseling echoed these concerns, warning that “presenting suicide as ‘one option’ opens the door to a path the Social Security employee is not equipped to handle,” and that “if [this instruction] is the one thing that they are being told to say, it puts the person on both sides [of the call] in a potentially precarious situation.”²⁰

Reassignments Come as SSA Struggles with Other Services

These reassignments are band-aid solutions to patch over ongoing service problems that have plagued the agency under your leadership. With regard to in-person services, 33 states have seen at least a 10 percent reduction in staff in the last fiscal year, with some individual field offices losing “one-quarter or more of their staff” and other rural field offices closing entirely due to staff shortages.²¹ Staff cuts have left the agency with one field office representative per nearly 4,000 beneficiaries – a ratio that is 12 percent higher than it was before the cuts.²² With over 100,000 people visiting their local SSA office every day,²³ these staffing reductions translate to declining customer service. According to a recent survey of SSA employees, nearly two-thirds reported “service quality had declined in the past 12 months” and 70 percent reported “service speed had declined.”²⁴

¹⁶ Information on file with the Office of Senator Ron Wyden.

¹⁷ Government Executive, “‘Suicide is only one option’: Social Security staff newly assigned to phone duties raise concerns over training,” Eric Katz, February 13, 2026, <https://www.govexec.com/management/2026/02/suicide-only-one-option-social-security-staff-newly-assigned-phone-duties-raise-concerns-over-training/411429/>.

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ Center for American Progress, “The Social Security Administration Is Bleeding Staff,” Molly Weston Williamson, January 30, 2026, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-social-security-administration-is-bleeding-staff/>.

²² Strategic Organizing Center, “Doing Less with Less: How the Trump Administration is Hollowing Out Social Security’s Frontline Workforce,” December 2025, p. 3, <https://thesoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/December-SOC-SSA-Report.pdf>.

²³ Urban Institute, “Closing Any Social Security Field Office Would Double the Time It Takes the Average Person to Drive to Their Nearest Office,” Dana Ferrante, January 30, 2026, <https://www.urban.org/stories/mapping-drive-time-to-social-security-field-offices>.

²⁴ Center for American Progress, “The Social Security Administration Is Bleeding Staff,” Molly Weston Williamson, January 30, 2026, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-social-security-administration-is-bleeding-staff/>.

Other metrics paint a similar story. For example, around the same time the Trump Administration took a wrecking ball to SSA, laying off and incentivizing the costly departure of thousands of essential employees, the “number of claimants filing for retirement benefits early—in effect cutting their own lifetime retirement benefits—spiked.”²⁵ A June 2025 poll from AARP indicated nearly a quarter of those who “considered filing or who filed for retirement benefits earlier than planned” were doing so out of fear that the situation at SSA will continue to decline, citing “[r]educed staff or limited access to in-person services at the Social Security Administration” as their reason for filing early, while others cited “[d]ifficulty reaching the Social Security Administration online or by phone.”²⁶

SSA also has seen declines in disability benefits applications, a metric that is historically “correlated with longer wait times or service reductions such as field office closures.”²⁷ Recent analysis further supports this, indicating that the “changes implemented by the second Trump administration” – including staff reassignments, increased processing times and denials, and changes in the agency’s phone system, field office walk-in policies, verification processes and requirements and staffing levels – have “created significant barriers for those seeking to apply for and maintain disability benefits.”²⁸ As a result, beneficiaries with disabilities reported facing “new and unprecedented” challenges in 2025, including increased difficulty in accessing benefits and frequently “getting stuck in a [customer service] loop,” which have had dire consequences – leading to “health deterioration, homelessness and even death” in some cases.²⁹

Moreover, reducing the number of field office visits while also making it harder to access in-person service means limiting access to critical “in-person services [that] older adults, disabled people, and children need.”³⁰ Rather than adequately staff the agency, you are dealing a blow to key agency functions – such as processing benefits and in-person services. This upheaval indicates you are not keeping your promise to keep SSA adequately staffed, or have customer service under control — and beneficiaries are starting to pay the price.

Failure to Respond to Previous Staffing Concerns

We have written to you before about our ongoing concerns with SSA’s staffing levels, reorganizations, and reassignments. After your initial reassignments in July, we wrote requesting more information regarding your decision to shift employees, the number of employees reassigned, the duration of their reassignment, and the impact of reassignments on 1-800 number

²⁵ Center for American Progress, “The Social Security Administration Is Bleeding Staff,” Molly Weston Williamson, January 30, 2026, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-social-security-administration-is-bleeding-staff/>.

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund and the American Association of People with Disabilities, “‘In the last year, it’s gotten a lot worse:’ A Qualitative Investigation of Barriers to Disability Benefits in 2025,” Katie Savin, Callie Freitag, and Matthew Borus, March 2, 2026, p. 8, https://dredf.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Barriers-to-Disability-Benefits-2025-Report_Access-Pass.pdf.

²⁹ *Id.*, p. 9.

³⁰ Center for American Progress, “The Social Security Administration Is Bleeding Staff,” Molly Weston Williamson, January 30, 2026, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-social-security-administration-is-bleeding-staff/>.

and field office wait times.³¹ However, your response did not shed light on key details regarding what reassignments looked like or who they impacted the most. For example, you did not provide details on the number of employees reassigned or clarified the length of their reassignment.³² And while you mentioned assessing the impact of these assignments by tracking key metrics, you avoided answering our metric-specific questions on the initial results of reassignments.³³

Conclusion and Questions

Your forced staff reassignments are harming Social Security beneficiaries, endangering the accuracy of claims, and wasting taxpayer dollars. When SSA pulls employees away from already understaffed field offices or from processing backlogs in claims, customer service and the timely delivery of benefits suffer. Given these concerning new reports about reassignments and customer service problems, we ask again that you provide additional information about employee reassignments and respond to the following questions by March 27, 2026:

1. How many SSA employees, in total, have been detailed and reassigned to the 1-800 number since June 2025? Please include the following information in your response:
 - a. The total number of SSA employees reassigned to the 1-800 number and these employees' original post;
 - b. The total number of SSA employees detailed to the 1-800 number and these employees' original post;
 - c. The number of reassigned and detailed employees broken down per position type by each category (i.e., the number of benefits authorizers, post-entitlement technical experts, field offices representatives, etc. reassigned to answering the 1-800 number);
 - d. The number of employees from each field office that were reassigned and detailed by each category;
 - e. The date each employee was reassigned and detailed by each category; and
 - f. The duration of these employees' reassignments and details by each category.
2. How many days in advance did SSA inform employees of their reassignment and detail before they began their new role?
3. Please describe the training agents receive before starting their assignment answering the 1-800 number, including the following information in your response:
 - a. The total number of hours of training each employee reassigned or detailed to the 1-800 number received by each category;
 - b. Whether these employees will receive additional training as they continue to answer the 1-800 number; and
 - c. The topics included in the training; and
 - d. The extent of the mental health training reassigned and detailed employees received.

³¹ Letter from Senators Elizabeth Warren and Ron Wyden to SSA Commissioner Frank Bisignano, July 13, 2025, https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/letter_to_bisignano_re_reassigning_workers_to_1-800_numbers1.pdf.

³² Letter on file with the Office of Senator Warren.

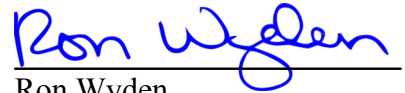
³³ *Id.*

4. What was the rationale behind reassigning and detailing these employees to the 1-800 number?
5. Please describe how shifting employees to answering the 1-800 number has impacted the following:
 - a. Field office services;
 - b. Processing retirement claims;
 - c. Processing disability claims;
 - d. Processing field office post-entitlement workloads;
 - e. Processing field office integrity workloads like work or medical continuing disability reviews and Supplemental Security Income redeterminations;
 - f. Processing post-entitlement and claims-related workloads in processing centers;
 - g. Workloads in support of Social Security Administrative Law Judge hearings and appellate review;
 - h. The functioning of SSA's technology; and
 - i. The SSA's finances unit.
6. Please describe how hiring targets factor in SSA's ongoing workforce management and shaping efforts (re-organizations, reassignments, details, and estimated upcoming retirements).

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



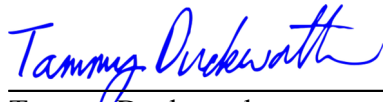
Ron Wyden
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Committee
on Finance



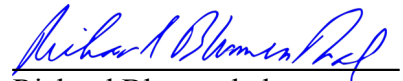
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Special
Committee on Aging



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



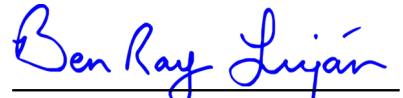
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



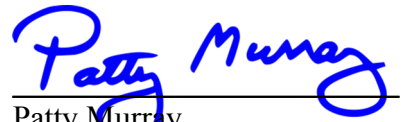
Tammy Baldwin
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Chris Van Hollen
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Angela D. Alsobrooks
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Patty Murray
United States Senator