

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 13, 2025

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

Dear Commissioner Bisignano:

We write regarding reports that the Social Security Administration (SSA) is reassigning thousands of field office employees to staff a “pilot” phone program, draining those already understaffed offices of vital manpower and leaving Social Security recipients unable to get in-person support.¹ This appears to be yet another indicator that you have broken the promise you made under oath to adequately staff the SSA—and just the latest of Trump Administration’s DOGE-influenced actions that make it harder for Americans to access the Social Security benefits they have earned.

The Trump Administration—initially led by the President’s then-close ally, Elon Musk—has taken a wrecking ball to the SSA. It has slashed the SSA workforce, closed offices, tampered with the phone service and website (causing recurring blackouts), and implemented burdensome new requirements that have degraded the Social Security program.

The results are not surprising: SSA is now facing a customer service crisis. In June, Senator Warren released the results of her investigation of SSA’s phone wait time, showing that phone wait times on SSA’s AI-driven 1-800 number average over 1.75 hours—despite SSA’s claim of just 19.2 minutes.² These long wait times reveal the truth: the Trump Administration’s cuts to the SSA workforce are disastrous—and any further staffing reductions will further degrade SSA and make it harder for seniors to get their monthly Social Security check or address other problems they may have with their benefits. As Jessica LaPointe, president of the American Federation of Government Employees Council 220, noted “it really invalidates [Bisignano’s] whole theory and vision that SSA doesn’t need any more staff and that AI—or other technology—will solve the customer service problems at the agency and on the 1-800 number.”³

¹ Government Executive, “SSA touts service improvements, but reassignments tell a different story,” Erich Wagner, July 9, 2025, <https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2025/07/ssa-touts-service-improvements-reassignments-tell-different-story/406618/>.

² Letter from Senator Elizabeth Warren to SSA Commissioner Frank Bisignano on 1-800 Wait Times, June 25, 2025, https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/warren_letter_to_bisignano_on_call_wait_times.pdf.

³ Government Executive, “SSA touts service improvements, but reassignments tell a different story,” Erich Wagner, July 9, 2025, <https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2025/07/ssa-touts-service-improvements-reassignments-tell-different-story/406618/>.

Instead of legitimately addressing these problems and reversing your efforts to cut the SSA workforce, it appears that you attempted to cover up the mess by shifting employees around to a new “pilot program” aimed at reducing phone wait times on SSA’s embattled 1-800 number. The “pilot program” would increase the number of staff answering calls to the 1-800 number by 25 percent. But the employees you reassigned—with just a few days’ notice—were frontline customer service representatives who directly assisted recipients visiting offices.⁴ Reassigning customer services representatives left field offices short-staffed—forcing the backroom employees who are responsible for actually processing claims to pick up the in-person customer service responsibilities.⁵ In a best-case scenario, your efforts to address the 1-800 wait times—even if they are successful—will almost certainly result in a terrible tradeoff, with longer wait times for in-person services, “robbing Peter to pay Paul.”⁶ LaPointe notes, “it’s just going to create a vicious cycle of work not getting cleared, people calling for status on work that’s sitting because the claims specialists now are going to have to pick up the slack of the customer service representatives that are redeployed to the tele-service centers.”⁷ She says that ultimately, though, “there’s no winning when you drain field offices of their staff, when you talk about how all we need are tech improvements while we’re shuffling chairs on a sinking Titanic.”⁸

Worse yet, you are implementing additional policies that make employees working phones less efficient. The new phone system includes a “call-sharing” mechanism, wherein calls to specific field offices will be redirected to another office in the state if is not answered in time.⁹ But frequently, the calls to particular field offices relate to a specific claim—which the second office will not be equipped to assist with. This only further drains resources and slows the workers and represents SSA’s “fundamental misunderstanding [] of what type of service our communities want and need.”¹⁰

Given these concerning reports, we ask that you provide additional information about the degradation of SSA services under President Trump, your decision to reassign employees in the wake of these problems, and what steps you will take to reduce the staffing shortages and improve service.

1. How did you decide to reassign field office workers to staff the 1-800 number?
 - a. Did you do any assessment of how many staffers would be left in each field office prior to announcing this decision?
 - b. Why did you only provide workers with a few days’ notice?

⁴ Government Executive, “SSA touts service improvements, but reassignments tell a different story,” Erich Wagner, July 9, 2025, <https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2025/07/ssa-touts-service-improvements-reassignments-tell-different-story/406618/>.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ Washington Post, “Social Security pulls field office staff to answer overwhelmed phone line,” Meryl Kornfield and Hannah Natanson, July 10, 2025, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/07/10/social-security-phone-service-wait-times/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=wp_homepage.

⁸ Government Executive, “SSA touts service improvements, but reassignments tell a different story,” Erich Wagner, July 9, 2025, <https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2025/07/ssa-touts-service-improvements-reassignments-tell-different-story/406618/>.

⁹ *Id.*

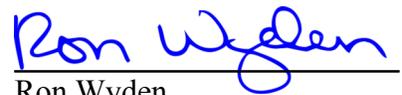
¹⁰ *Id.*

2. How many field office workers did you reassign to the 1-800 number?
 - a. Please provide the number of employees from each field office that were reassigned.
 - b. How long will they be reassigned?
3. What have been the initial results of these reassignments?
 - a. In the week prior to the reassignments, what were average and median 1-800 wait times for a caller to speak to a live agent?
 - b. In the week prior to the reassignments, what were the average and median wait time for a caller to receive a callback from a representative?
 - c. In the week prior to the reassignments, what was the percentage of callers that reached a representative?
 - d. In the week prior to the reassignments, what was the agent busy rate?
 - e. In the week prior to the reassignments, what was the percentage of calls handled by a callback?
 - f. What are the current average and median 1-800 wait times for a caller to speak to a live agent since the reassignments?
 - g. What are the current average and median wait time for a caller to receive a callback from a representative?
 - h. What is the current percentage of callers that reach a representative?
 - i. What is the current agent busy rate?
 - j. What is the current percentage of calls handled by a callback?
 - k. In the week prior to the reassignments, what were average and median wait times for in-person services at the locations where you made reassignments?
 - l. Since the reassignments, what were average and median wait times for in-person services at the locations where you made reassignments?
 - m. Has there been any changes in the percentage of cases that are successfully resolved at these facilities?
4. What was your rationale for implementing a “phone-sharing” mechanism?
 - a. Had you conducted any outreach with on-the-ground employees, advocates, or beneficiaries prior to implementing this change?
 - b. What analyses have you conducted indicating that this will improve service and reduce wait times?
5. Do you plan to resume staffing cuts in light of the Supreme Court’s recent decision?
 - a. If so, how many employees do you anticipate firing?
 - b. If you do intend to fire additional employees, how do you intend to avoid service cuts?

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator