

June 25, 2025

Frank Bisignano
Commissioner
Social Security Administration
1106 West High Rise
6401 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21235

Dear Mr. Bisignano,

I write regarding new evidence from my office that indicates you are misleading the public about long wait times and service delays at the Social Security Administration (SSA). Specifically, you have made bold claims that you could get phone wait times “to under a minute”¹ and, in May, a spokesperson for the agency claimed that average wait times were only 12 minutes.² And now, SSA’s recently updated “dashboard”—which contains out-of-date information and has been stripped down to just a few metrics—claims that call wait times are just 19.2 minutes.³

But this same dashboard contains additional contradictory information, showing that the wait time for nine of every ten calls is longer than 20 minutes and that more than half of all calls remain unanswered for up to two hours.⁴ And a phone survey conducted by my office between June 12 and June 20 corroborates this, finding that wait times averaged nearly an hour and 45 minutes, with maximum wait times exceeding three hours.⁵ Further, callers were frequently hung up on with no option to leave a call back number, or had their calls unexpectedly dropped after hours waiting on the line.⁶ This represents a catastrophic customer service failure under your watch at SSA. I write to demand answers about this attempt to cover up the truth—which is that the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE)’s efforts have made it harder for America’s 70 million Social Security recipients⁷ to access their hard-earned benefits.

¹ CNBC, “Senate confirms Trump pick Bisignano to lead Social Security Administration. What that may mean for benefits,” Lorie Konish, May 6, 2025, <https://www.cnbc.com/2025/05/06/senate-confirms-bisignano-what-it-means-for-social-security-benefits.html>.

² Federal News Network, “SSA will get call wait times down to ‘single digits’ using AI, commissioner tells employees,” Jory Heckman, May 30, 2025, <https://federalnewsnetwork.com/it-modernization/2025/05/ssa-will-get-call-wait-times-down-to-single-digits-using-ai-commissioner-tells-employees/>.

³ Social Security Administration, “Social Security performance,” <https://www.ssa.gov/ssa-performance>.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Independent analysis of call wait times. [On file with the Office of Senator Elizabeth Warren.]

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ CBS News, “Social Security’s insolvency date is now a year earlier. Here’s how it could impact your benefits.” Aimee Picchi, June 19, 2025, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/social-security-trustees-report-2025-insolvency-when-will-benefits-cut/>

Since President Trump’s election, DOGE—originally led by Elon Musk and now burrowed into the federal government⁸—has taken a sledgehammer to the SSA, cutting staff and undermining the agency at every turn.⁹ In February, SSA announced plans to cut 7,000 of the agency’s 57,000 employees—more than 10% of staff—in response to President Trump’s executive orders.¹⁰ More than 3,000 employees¹¹ have already accepted buyout agreements, leading SSA employees to express concern about the ongoing viability of the program, stating that “[w]ith the limited employees, both in numbers and experience, there is no way that SSA can function.”¹²

These deep cuts, paired with DOGE-led initiatives like the failed “anti-fraud” checks, have vastly degraded SSA’s services.¹³ Retirement claim processing reportedly slowed by 25 percent solely due to DOGE’s so-called “anti-fraud” efforts while catching practically no fraud—indeed, only two claims out of 110,000 were flagged as potentially fraudulent.¹⁴ Wait times for SSA’s national help line skyrocketed, with average wait times more-than-doubling from 50 minutes in August 2024 to nearly an hour and 45 minutes in February 2025.¹⁵ Less than half of all callers—seniors and disabled Americans who rely on their Social Security benefits—even reached a representative before hanging up.¹⁶

Despite this combination of cutbacks and service disruptions, you have fired back against criticism of the Trump Administration’s attacks on Social Security. In particular, you have denied the widespread reports that these cuts have increased delays and wait times, and your office is claiming that DOGE’s efforts have made the SSA *more* efficient, with an agency spokesperson claiming that phone wait times had been halved to 12 minutes in May.¹⁷

But the reality is that the Trump Administration is failing at SSA. And you appear to be obfuscating these failures. A report by the Washington Post indicates that:

⁸ NPR, “Elon Musk may be gone but DOGE isn’t done remaking the federal government,” Shannon Bond and Stephen Fowler, June 16, 2025, <https://www.npr.org/2025/06/16/nx-s1-5431926/doge-future-elon-musk>.

⁹ Washington Post, “How DOGE’s grand plan to remake Social Security is backfiring,” Hannah Natanson, Lisa Rein, and Meryl Kornfield, May 16, 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/05/16/doge-social-security-musk-trump-cuts/>

¹⁰ Social Security Administration, “Social Security Announces Workforce and Organization Plans,” updated April 18, 2025, <https://blog.ssa.gov/social-security-announces-workforce-and-organization-plans/>.

¹¹ Social Security Administration, “Social Security Administration Highlights Key Accomplishments in the First 100 Days of the Trump Administration,” press release, April 29, 2025, <https://www.ssa.gov/news/press/releases/2025/#2025-04-29>.

¹² The Guardian, “‘I have to worry each month’: social security cuts incite fears of payment disruptions,” Michael Sainato, May 20, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/may/20/social-security-disruptions-doge>.

¹³ Office of Senator Elizabeth Warren, “New Social Security Data Reveals Musk, DOGE Lied in Claims of Social Security Fraud,” press release, May 15, 2025, <https://www.warren.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/new-social-security-data-reveals-musk-doge-lied-in-claims-of-social-security-fraud>.

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ Yahoo!Finance, “Social Security call wait times soar — what advisors need to know,” Elijah Nicholson-Messmer, March 27, 2025, <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/social-security-call-wait-times-201303864.html>.

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ Federal News Network, “SSA will get call wait times down to ‘single digits’ using AI, commissioner tells employees,” Jory Heckman, May 30, 2025, <https://federalnewsnetwork.com/it-modernization/2025/05/ssa-will-get-call-wait-times-down-to-single-digits-using-ai-commissioner-tells-employees/>.

Social Security has stopped publicly reporting its processing times for benefits, the 1-800 number's current call wait time and numerous other performance metrics, which customers and advocates have used to track the agency's struggling customer service programs. The agency removed a menu of live phone and claims data from its website earlier this month.¹⁸

Instead, you have replaced that information with misleading, confusing, and contradictory information on wait times. An SSA webpage titled "Social Security Performance" purports to show an average speed of answer (excluding callback wait times) of 19.2 minutes.¹⁹ But the fine print reveals that this information is wildly out of date: the data is for the "Fiscal Year to Date (through the last completed month)"—meaning that it is averaged over much of the past year.²⁰ This data is neither timely nor accurate with regard to information Social Security recipients need: an answer to the question of how long they will be forced to wait on the phone if they call the agency today.

Moreover, the performance dashboard contains contradictory information about wait times, showing that less than 10 percent of calls are answered within 20 minutes, fewer than 25 percent of calls are answered within an hour, and fewer than half of all calls have been answered within two hours.²¹ It is impossible for the average time of answer for a call to be under 20 minutes—let alone 12 minutes, as a spokesperson recently claimed²²—when less than 10 percent of all calls have been answered by that point.²³ A separate data feed—embedded roughly halfway down the SSA's national help line webpage—also seems to show that wait times typically exceed an hour and sometimes reach two and a half hours throughout the week.²⁴ Yet in the midst of these ongoing problems and your attempts to misdirect the public, you still claimed that you would get wait times down to "under a minute."²⁵

Because the claims that you and your agency have been making were not consistent with the reports of ongoing problems that I was hearing from constituents, advocates, and other press reports, my staff conducted an independent phone survey of wait times and service efficacy at the SSA. Specifically, from June 12 through June 20, my staff made hourly phone calls to SSA to track wait times and the customer experience. What we found was deeply troubling: in recent weeks, call wait times have averaged nearly an hour and 45 minutes for the national help line, and often exceeded three hours.²⁶ Callers frequently couldn't get through at all, and were automatically

¹⁸ Washington Post, "Social Security stops reporting call wait times and other metrics," Meryl Kornfield and Hannah Natanson, June 20, 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/06/20/social-security-wait-times-cuts/>.

¹⁹ Social Security Administration, "Social Security performance," <https://www.ssa.gov/ssa-performance>.

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *Id.*

²² Federal News Network, "SSA will get call wait times down to 'single digits' using AI, commissioner tells employees," Jory Heckman, May 30, 2025, <https://federalnewsnetwork.com/it-modernization/2025/05/ssa-will-get-call-wait-times-down-to-single-digits-using-ai-commissioner-tells-employees/>.

²³ Social Security Administration, "Social Security performance," <https://www.ssa.gov/ssa-performance>.

²⁴ Social Security Administration, "Contact Social Security By Phone," <https://www.ssa.gov/agency/contact/phone.html>.

²⁵ CNBC, "Senate confirms Trump pick Bisignano to lead Social Security Administration. What that may mean for benefits," Lorie Konish, May 6, 2025, <https://www.cnbc.com/2025/05/06/senate-confirms-bisignano-what-it-means-for-social-security-benefits.html>.

²⁶ Independent analysis of call wait times. [On file with the Office of Senator Elizabeth Warren.]

forced to hang up without an option to leave a callback number during periods of high call volume.²⁷ Other times, callers remained on the line waiting for an answer for two or more hours before having their calls unexpectedly dropped.

These delays are unacceptable—and made even worse by your misleading claims that service has actually improved under your watch. Service disruptions and barriers make it harder for beneficiaries to receive their Social Security benefits—payments which are the primary source of income for more than half of America’s seniors.²⁸ Americans who rely on their Social Security checks deserve better service and more accountability from you and the SSA leadership.

To address my concerns about these long delays, I request answers to the following questions by July 2, 2025:

1. What is the average wait time for a Social Security beneficiary calling the National Help Line in the past week?
 - a. What is the average wait time for a callback in the past week?
2. How did the SSA calculate its estimate that wait times averaged just 12 minutes in May?
 - a. What processes does the SSA use to verify that reported call wait times are accurate and not a misleadingly optimistic picture of true conditions faced by beneficiaries?
3. What steps will you take to ensure that data collection practices and tracking of wait times will be more accurate moving forward, so that the public can actually believe any future claims you make about reduced wait times?
4. When do you believe that phone wait times for the SSA will be “under a minute” as you recently claimed was feasible?
 - a. What changes will the SSA be making to its protocols to achieve this goal?
5. Why are callers frequently not permitted to leave a callback number during periods of high call volume?
 - a. Does SSA have the means and intention of calling back individuals who are automatically dropped from calls without leaving a callback number?
6. Why did the SSA take down the webpage that allows the public to track average and live call wait times?²⁹
 - a. Why were many of the data feeds previously displayed on the website removed when the website was republished?
 - b. Is there a plan to bring back the more detailed data that used to appear on the webpage?
7. How do you intend to reduce the backlog of SSA requests that you recently estimated runs 6.1 million items long?³⁰

²⁷ *Id.*

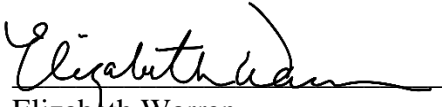
²⁸ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, “Social Security Benefits Are Modest,” Paul N. Van de Water and Kathleen Romig, December 7, 2023, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/social-security/social-security-benefits-are-modest>.

²⁹ Washington Post, “Social Security stops reporting call wait times and other metrics,” Meryl Kornfield and Hannah Natanson, June 20, 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/06/20/social-security-wait-times-cuts/>.

³⁰ Federal News Network, “SSA will get call wait times down to ‘single digits’ using AI, commissioner tells employees,” Jory Heckman, May 30, 2025, <https://federalnewsnetwork.com/it-modernization/2025/05/ssa-will-get-call-wait-times-down-to-single-digits-using-ai-commissioner-tells-employees/>.

8. What measures will be taken to ensure these requests are not simply dropped, but are responsive to the needs of beneficiaries?

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator