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U.S. House of Representatives

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March 18, 2020

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The Honorable Andrew Saul
Commissioner
Social Security Administration
6401 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21235

Dear Commissioner Saul,

Coronavirus is an unprecedented challenge to America. We are writing to urge the Social Security Administration (SSA) to vigorously safeguard the health of the public and agency employees during the coronavirus crisis, while also minimizing disruptions in services to the American people.

Throughout its 85-year history, Social Security has never missed a payment. Seniors, families who have lost a breadwinner, and people with disabilities rely on Social Security to pay their rent or mortgage, put food on the table, pay medical bills, and meet other basic needs. It is vital that SSA remains able to send benefits on time, each month.

We know the decision to close SSA field offices to the public, except in certain very limited circumstances, was a difficult decision. SSA serves many of those who are among the most vulnerable to coronavirus, including seniors and individuals with severe medical conditions. This move will save lives and will also protect the health of SSA frontline staff, whose public service is so critical.

We understand that as coronavirus spreads, you are prioritizing work that fulfills SSA's core mission of providing benefits to individuals eligible for Social Security retirement, survivor and disability benefits, and for Supplemental Security Income. We fully support this prioritization.

We also urge SSA to maximize the use of telework throughout the agency and the state Disability Determination Services agencies, and to use leave judiciously, in accordance with Office of Personnel Management (OPM) guidelines. OPM has issued guidance for federal agencies to use telework and leave policies to reduce the spread of coronavirus, consistent with

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recommendations by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Telework is a commonsense response to coronavirus and we urge you to maximize its use across SSA.

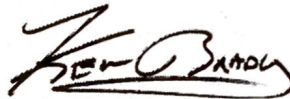
In addition, we encourage SSA to communicate regularly and robustly with the public and with its employees about SSA's coronavirus response. Social Security is a program that affects the lives of all Americans. As SSA's response to coronavirus evolves, the public must be able to count on timely information about how to access benefits and services, including assistance when a problem arises. In addition, employees need up-to-date information about how SSA is working to protect their health and safety.

Finally, we recognize that coronavirus will require extraordinary responses by our leaders, our communities and all Americans. This is certainly true of the many federal agencies that directly serve the public, including SSA. We stand ready to work with you to ensure you have the resources and authority needed to respond.

Sincerely,



Richard E. Neal
Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means



Kevin Brady
Ranking Member
Committee on Ways and Means



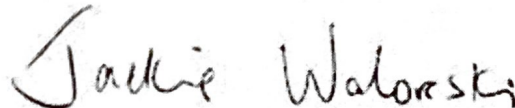
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