

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, D.C. 20515**

April 15, 2025

Mr. Leland Dudek  
Acting Commissioner  
U.S. Social Security Administration  
6401 Security Boulevard  
Baltimore, MD 21235

Dear Acting Commissioner Dudek,

We write with alarm over the Trump Administration's ongoing attacks on the Social Security benefits that approximately 70 million Americans rely on, and the chaos inflicted on the Social Security Administration (SSA), which provides critical services to support these benefits.<sup>1</sup> We demand that you immediately halt this outrageous assault and provide the information necessary for our Committees to investigate the harm inflicted on the American people.

Social Security has been the bedrock of financial security for millions of Americans since President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed it into law nearly 90 years ago. Today, almost all workers contribute to the program and earn Social Security benefits, and nearly one in three households include at least one person who receives Social Security. The income Social Security provides is vital for retirees, families who have lost a breadwinner, and workers who have experienced a career-ending injury or illness. The earned benefits help American families put food on the table, pay for rent, heat their homes, cover medical bills, and more. Social Security's importance to the American people and its approximately 70 million beneficiaries cannot be overstated.

Changes or cuts to SSA that prevent Americans from accessing their benefits are backdoor benefit cuts. For example, according to recent news reports, the Trump Administration has cut SSA's communications staff so deeply that last week, agency senior leadership reportedly announced plans to rely on Elon Musk's social media platform, X, to communicate with the public.<sup>2</sup> While this situation may be evolving, we note that one in four seniors do not use the internet, and those who do should not be forced to join a commercial social media platform to learn about important changes to their SSA benefits and customer service.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Social Security Administration, *Monthly Statistical Snapshot, February 2025* (online at [www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/quickfacts/stat\\_snapshot/2025-02.pdf](http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/quickfacts/stat_snapshot/2025-02.pdf)) (accessed Mar. 27, 2025).

<sup>2</sup> *SSA shifts to X posts for official messaging after cuts to communications staff*, Federal News Network (Apr. 11, 2025) (online at [federalnewsnetwork.com/agency-oversight/2025/04/ssa-shifts-to-x-posts-for-official-messaging-after-cuts-to-communications-staff/](https://federalnewsnetwork.com/agency-oversight/2025/04/ssa-shifts-to-x-posts-for-official-messaging-after-cuts-to-communications-staff/)).

<sup>3</sup> Pew Research Center, *7% of Americans Don't Use the Internet. Who Are They?* (online at [www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2021/04/02/7-of-americans-dont-use-the-internet-who-are-they/](https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2021/04/02/7-of-americans-dont-use-the-internet-who-are-they/)) (accessed Apr. 4, 2025).

In addition, we are receiving reports that SSA has not been responding to congressional inquiries over the past week. This apparent clampdown on necessary communication and provision of information to Congress simply cannot continue.

Finally, on March 18, 2025, SSA announced that it would terminate the ability of individuals to apply for benefits or make direct deposit changes by telephone beginning on March 31, 2025. Instead, these beneficiaries, which include certain seniors, survivors, spouses, and children who are applying for Social Security, would need to verify their identity online or visit an SSA office in-person.<sup>4</sup> This change would have threatened taxpayers' access to their earned Social Security benefits by forcing anyone who cannot go online to instead visit a field office. This includes the one in four seniors who do not use the internet, and anyone who may live far from a field office, lack quick and reliable transportation to an SSA office, or who faces obstacles in visiting a field office due to age, illness, disability, lack of funds, or other circumstances.<sup>5</sup>

During a meeting with Social Security advocates on March 24, 2025, you reportedly acknowledged that this change would normally take two years to implement. You also reportedly acknowledged that making this change so rapidly will create opportunities for scammers and may increase the likelihood that beneficiaries will be defrauded.<sup>6</sup> On March 26, 2025, after "listen[ing] to [y]our customers, Congress, advocates, and others," you announced that SSA was changing the effective date for the new identity verification policy from March 31, 2025, to April 14, 2025.<sup>7</sup> You also announced that for benefit claims, the new restrictions would apply specifically to applicants for Social Security retirement, survivor, and auxiliary (spouse or child) benefits—or nearly 7 million individuals, annually.<sup>8</sup>

SSA is now indicating these restrictions would only limit those seeking to make direct deposit changes, and that it intends to implement "new technological capabilities" to "perform anti-fraud check [sic] on all claims filed over the phone." Notably, anyone flagged in one of these "anti-fraud checks" would have to go to an SSA office in-person to verify their identity.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Social Security Administration, *Press Release: Social Security Strengthens Identity Proofing Requirements and Expedites Direct Deposit Changes to One Day* (Mar. 18, 2025) (online at [www.ssa.gov/news/press/releases/2025/#2025-03-18](https://www.ssa.gov/news/press/releases/2025/#2025-03-18)); Social Security Administration, *Social Security Updates Recently Announced Identity Proofing Requirements* (Mar. 26, 2025) (online at <https://blog.ssa.gov/social-security-updates-recently-announced-identity-proofing-requirements/>).

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> *Social Security Rushing Service Cuts at White House Request, Sources Say*, Axios (Mar. 25, 2025) (online at [www.axios.com/2025/03/24/social-security-cuts-doge](https://www.axios.com/2025/03/24/social-security-cuts-doge)).

<sup>7</sup> Social Security Administration, *Social Security Updates Recently Announced Identity Proofing Requirements* (Mar. 26, 2025) (online at [blog.ssa.gov/social-security-updates-recently-announced-identity-proofing-requirements/](https://blog.ssa.gov/social-security-updates-recently-announced-identity-proofing-requirements/)).

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*; Social Security Administration, *Annual Statistical Supplement, 2024*, Table 2, Footnote 4 (Dec. 2024) (online at [www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/supplement/2024/2f4-2f6.html#table2.f4](https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/supplement/2024/2f4-2f6.html#table2.f4)).

<sup>9</sup> *Social Security Backs Off Cuts to Phone Services Amid Outcry*, Axios (Apr. 9, 2025) (online at [www.axios.com/2025/04/09/social-security-cuts-doge](https://www.axios.com/2025/04/09/social-security-cuts-doge)); *What to Know about Proving Your Identity* (accessed Apr. 14, 2025) (online at [www.ssa.gov/news/identity-proofing.html](https://www.ssa.gov/news/identity-proofing.html)).

If the changes you initially announced had gone into effect, every one of your customers would have been affected by the chaos, delays, and fraud risks the Trump Administration is inflicting on Social Security. According to a memo sent to you on March 13, 2025, eliminating the option of telephonic identity verification would cause an estimated 75,000 to 85,000 additional individuals to visit SSA offices each week, leading to longer wait and processing times. The memo also noted that this change would increase costs and demand for resources, staff, and systems updates, and that it would have a disproportionate impact on vulnerable populations.<sup>10</sup>

Despite concerns about the impact on beneficiaries and the complete lack of evidence to justify new burdens on the public, SSA was reportedly rushing to implement these changes at the request of the White House.<sup>11</sup> As you reportedly stated, “The reason that we’re on this timeline is because we received a request from the White House. The leadership above me believes that we should do a rapid rollout.”<sup>12</sup>

The Trump Administration’s decision to make it harder for people to access their Social Security benefits by limiting identity verification options is especially concerning given the damage done to SSA under Elon Musk’s Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) and your leadership. Offices and phone lines are already overwhelmed by people asking if the benefits and services they earned will be safe from Mr. Musk and the Trump Administration.<sup>13</sup> And last month, you threatened to cease operations of the entire SSA instead of complying with a simple court order.<sup>14</sup>

The Trump Administration seems intent on making things even worse for the one in five Americans who rely on SSA for services and benefits each month.<sup>15</sup> The Trump Administration has reportedly already purged 7,000 SSA employees, or about one in eight workers, and is soon

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<sup>10</sup> *Memo Details Trump Plan to Sabotage the Social Security Administration*, Popular Information (Mar. 17, 2025) (online at <https://popular.info/p/exclusive-memo-details-trump-plan>).

<sup>11</sup> *Social Security Identity Verification Could Deny or Delay Benefits for Millions*, Forbes (Mar. 19, 2024) (online at [www.forbes.com/sites/shaharziv/2025/03/19/social-security-anti-fraud-plan-could-deny-benefits-for-millions/](https://www.forbes.com/sites/shaharziv/2025/03/19/social-security-anti-fraud-plan-could-deny-benefits-for-millions/)); *Social Security Rushing Service Cuts at White House Request, Sources Say*, Axios (Mar. 25, 2025) (online at [www.axios.com/2025/03/24/social-security-cuts-doge](https://www.axios.com/2025/03/24/social-security-cuts-doge)).

<sup>12</sup> *Social Security Chief Says White House Ordered ‘Rapid’ Phone Services Cutbacks*, HuffPost (Mar. 24, 2025) (online at [www.huffpost.com/entry/leland-dudek-social-security-phone-service\\_n\\_67e1bb85e4b03e4bddd128db?origin=top-ad-recirc](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/leland-dudek-social-security-phone-service_n_67e1bb85e4b03e4bddd128db?origin=top-ad-recirc)).

<sup>13</sup> *Long Waits, Waves of Calls, Website Crashes: Social Security is Breaking Down*, Washington Post (Mar. 25, 2025) (online at [www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/03/25/social-security-phones-doge-cuts/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/03/25/social-security-phones-doge-cuts/)).

<sup>14</sup> *Social Security Chief Backs Down on Threat to Shut Down Agency After DOGE Ruling*, NBC News (Mar. 22, 2025) (online at [www.nbcnews.com/politics/trump-administration/social-security-chief-backs-threat-shut-agency-doge-ruling-rcna197632](https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/trump-administration/social-security-chief-backs-threat-shut-agency-doge-ruling-rcna197632)).

<sup>15</sup> Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, *Trump Administration, DOGE Activities Risk SSA Operations and Security of Personal Data* (Mar. 25, 2025) (online at [www.cbpp.org/research/social-security/trump-administration-doge-activities-risk-ssa-operations-and-security-of](https://www.cbpp.org/research/social-security/trump-administration-doge-activities-risk-ssa-operations-and-security-of)).

planning to slash the agency's workforce even further.<sup>16</sup> These mass firings and departures will only add to the chaos and confusion if the Administration again shifts course and moves forward with its plans to eliminate phone-based identity verification.<sup>17</sup>

We demand information on the ongoing changes at SSA, including potential communication changes, plans for responding to congressional inquiries, and new policies regarding the ability of individuals to apply for Social Security benefits by telephone and for beneficiaries to update their direct deposit by telephone. We also request the following documents and information by April 29, 2025:

1. All communications concerning SSA's plans to communicate with the media and the public after April 7, 2025, including plans to rely on Elon Musk's social media platform, X;
2. All communications concerning SSA's plans for responding to congressional inquiries after April 7, 2025;
3. All drafts of the March 13, 2025, memo released with the title "Strengthening Identity Assurance for SSA Transactions;"
4. All communications concerning the adoption and implementation of the recommendations in the March 13, 2025, memo titled "Strengthening Identity Assurance for SSA Transactions," including but not limited to communications involving any of the following individuals:
  - a. Leland Dudek, Doris Diaz, Dustin Brown, Chad Poist, Michael Russo, Gina Clemons, Tiffany Flick, Michelle King, Akash Bobba, Scott Coulter, Marko Elez, Luke Farritor, Antonio Gracias, Gautier Cole Killian, Jon Koval, Nikhil Rajpa, Payton Rehling, Ethan Shaotran, Dawn Bystry, Mark Steffensen, Frank Bisignano, Amy Gleason, and Elon Musk;
5. The names and titles of the individuals within the Executive Office of the President to which Acting Commissioner Dudek was referring when he said: "The reason that we're on this timeline is because we received a request from the White House. The leadership above me believes that we should do a rapid rollout."

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<sup>16</sup> *Social Security Faces Thousands More Job Cuts Even with Service in Tailspin*, Washington Post (Apr. 4, 2025) (online at [www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/04/04/social-security-layoffs-trump-musk/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/04/04/social-security-layoffs-trump-musk/)).

<sup>17</sup> *Social Security In-Person Identity Checks Opposed by Advocates and Retirees Alike*, Associated Press (Mar. 19, 2025) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/social-security-doge-fraud-services-35efe10cfa1ee40c1e9f12385b2cc35>); *Social Security to Require Millions to Make Claims In Person Rather Than By Phone*, Washington Post (Mar. 18, 2025) (online at [www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/03/18/social-security-musk-trump-doge/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/03/18/social-security-musk-trump-doge/)); *Memo Details Trump Plan to Sabotage the Social Security Administration*, Popular Information (Mar. 24, 2025) (online at <https://popular.info/p/exclusive-memo-details-trump-plan>).

- a. All communications between the Executive Office of the President and SSA regarding the “timeline” or “rollout” referred to above; and
  - b. All communications between any individual at SSA and Elon Musk, DOGE, a DOGE team, anyone employed by Mr. Musk, anyone employed by any company Mr. Musk owns, or anyone employed by any other entity over which Mr. Musk exercises some degree of control, concerning the “timeline” or “rollout” referred to above;
6. All communications and documents referring or relating to the adoption of the “identity proofing requirements” and “identity proofing procedures” announced on March 18, including but not limited to:
  - a. Plans to mitigate delays in benefit applications and increased processing times following the adoption of the “identity proofing requirements” and “identity proofing procedures” announced on March 18;
  - b. Plans to address increased foot traffic at SSA offices following the adoption of the “identity proofing requirements” and “identity proofing procedures” announced on March 18;
  - c. Plans to address increased call volumes following the adoption of the “identity proofing requirements” and “identity proofing procedures” announced on March 18;
  - d. Plans to address fraud and scams against Social Security beneficiaries caused by the adoption of the “identity proofing requirements” and “identity proofing procedures” announced on March 18; and
  - e. Costs of implementing the “identity proofing requirements” and “identity proofing procedures” announced on March 18;
7. The date and time of any assessment of the legality of the “identity proofing requirements” and “identity proofing procedures” announced on March 18 and, if such an assessment was made in writing, the title or subject of such assessment;
8. The date on which the “identity proofing requirements” and “identity proofing procedures” announced on March 18 were first proposed to Acting Commissioner Dudek, and the names and titles of the individuals who made such proposals;
9. All communications concerning the “updated measures” and “updated policy” announced on March 26, 2025, including but not limited to communications involving any of the individuals listed in request number two above;

10. All communications concerning the possible decision on or around April 9, 2025, to further update which applicants and beneficiaries can apply for benefits or direct deposit changes via telephone, including but not limited to the email from the White House referenced in the April 9, 2025, *Axios* story titled “Social Security Backs Off Cuts to Phone Services Amid Outcry”; and
11. A detailed description of all anti-fraud technology that SSA plans to implement for callers who wish to verify their identity over the telephone, including but not limited to a detailed description of how SSA plans to utilize that technology and how the technology will determine which callers to “flag.”

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. The Committee on Ways and Means has jurisdiction over the Social Security Federal Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance program and the Supplemental Security Income program, operated by SSA. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee Democratic Staff at (202) 225-5051 (Oversight and Government Reform) and (202) 225-4021 (Ways and Means).

Sincerely,



Gerald E. Connolly  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Oversight and Government  
Reform



Richard E. Neal  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Ways and Means

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

The Honorable Jason Smith, Chairman  
Committee on Ways and Means