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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6200

GREGG RICHARD, STAFF DIRECTOR
JOSHUA SHEINKMAN, DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

October 22, 2025

Dear Chairman Crapo,

We write today to urge you to table the consideration of Thomas March Bell's nomination to be Inspector General (IG) of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Mr. Bell has been nominated to fill a position which is not vacant as President Trump's attempt to remove the current HHS IG Christi Grimm was unlawful and illegitimate. Proceeding with Mr. Bell's nomination would undermine the integrity of the IG's office, and deeply undermine the credibility of laws passed by Congress.

The Securing Inspector General Independence Act (the Act), an amendment to the Inspector General Act of 1978, sets out the process for proper removal of an IG. Under the law, which you voted for, the President is required to provide written 30-day notice to both Houses of Congress and include "substantive rationale, including detailed and case-specific reasons, for any such removal."¹ The Act passed with strong bipartisan support, passing the Senate by a vote of 93-1 on December 23, 2022, with every member of the Senate Finance Committee voting in favor, except two members who were absent.² The Act's notice requirement is critical to Congress's role in overseeing the Executive Branch, and ensuring that political motivation does not interfere with the IGs' independent, non-partisan role of rooting out waste, fraud, and abuse, and protecting taxpayer dollars.

On January 24, 2025, President Trump flagrantly disregarded federal law when he attempted to remove IG Grimm, and more than a dozen other IGs, without written 30-day notice and without "substantive rationale." The IGs, instead, received similarly-worded, brief emails stating that they were being removed from their positions.³ Neither House of Congress received written 30-day notice of, or "substantive rationale" for, the removals, as required by federal law.

¹ 5 U.S.C. §403(b).

² Congress.gov, All Information (Except Text) for H.R.7776 - James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023, 117th Congress (2021-2022), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/7776/all-info>, (Sen. Burr (R-NC) and Sen. Sasse (R-NE) were absent for the vote on the floor).

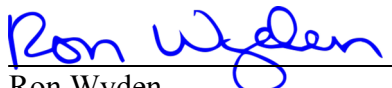
³ Lindsay Whitehurst, *Government Watchdogs Fired by Trump Sue his Administration and ask a Judge to Reinstate Them*, Associated Press, Feb. 12, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/watchdogs-trump-mass-firing-inspectors-general-5b4629fb34a168322bf61170286efb76>.

IG Grimm's confirmation was secured on a bipartisan basis. She began serving as Acting-IG during President Trump's first term. Upon being nominated to serve permanently in the position, she was reported favorably by the Senate Finance Committee by a unanimous vote on November 17, 2021, and subsequently confirmed by the U.S. Senate on February 17, 2022, by a voice vote without objections.⁴ There has been no lawful action to remove IG Grimm from her Senate-confirmed post, and she remains the Senate-confirmed HHS IG.

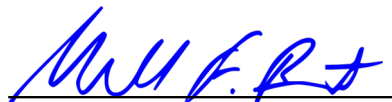
While the Senate Finance Committee received a nomination for Thomas March Bell to be HHS IG on March 24, 2025, his nomination is invalid as the position is already filled by IG Grimm. Moving forward on his nomination erodes the critical, non-partisan role that Congress established for all IGs, and flouts the legally required process for appointing and removing IGs.

We strenuously urge you to decline to consider Mr. Bell's nomination. IG Grimm – and all other improperly removed IGs – must be reinstated immediately in accordance with the law. Absent such action, or until the courts have reached a final determination on challenges to President Trump's attempted removals of the IGs, the President's actions in attempting to remove IG Grimm were in clear violation of the law. The Senate Finance Committee should not enable this lawlessness, or undermine its own credibility, by considering Thomas March Bell's nomination.

Sincerely,

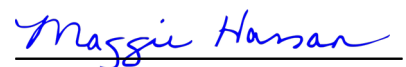

Ron Wyden
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Committee
on Finance


Maria Cantwell
United States Senator


Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator


Mark R. Warner
United States Senator

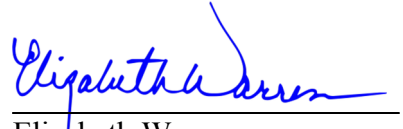

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator


Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator

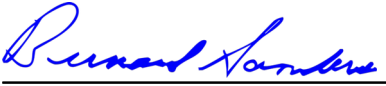
⁴ See United States Senate Committee on Finance, Open Executive Session to Consider Favorably Reporting Pending Nominations, Nov. 17, 2021, at 26, <https://www.finance.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/11-17-21%20--%20Executive%20Session%20-%20Nominations.pdf>; Congress.gov, PN750 – Christi A. Grimm – Department of Health and Human Services, 117th Congress (2021-2022), <https://www.congress.gov/nomination/117th-congress/750>.



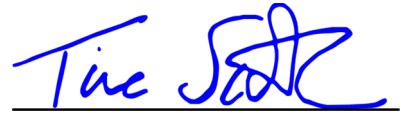
Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



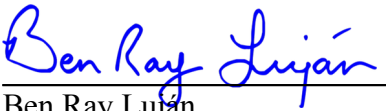
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



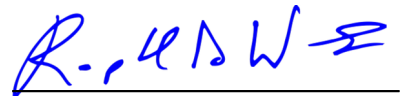
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



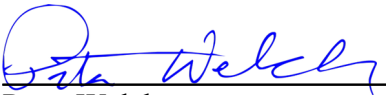
Tina Smith
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



Peter Welch
United States Senator