

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 19, 2020

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

Dear Commissioner Saul:

We understand that the Social Security Administration (SSA) recently started a new initiative to improve outreach to at risk populations during the COVID-19 pandemic. We write to request detailed information about this effort and how SSA will serve the most vulnerable while protecting the health of the American public and SSA employees.

As you know, applications for Social Security and Supplemental Security Income benefits declined significantly after March, when SSA made the difficult but necessary decision to close field offices to the public and to offer services primarily online or by phone. We are concerned that during the COVID-19 pandemic many at risk seniors, people with disabilities, and survivors are not aware of SSA services and benefits, are unable to reach the agency, or are experiencing other barriers to services.

We understand that SSA is exploring different strategies to meet the needs of at risk populations. We want to support this important work. Please provide us with detailed information about SSA's efforts to assess the extent to which individuals who are potentially-eligible for benefits provided by SSA are being served and any current or planned outreach strategies to ensure they are served. Specifically:

1. What is SSA's assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the ability of at risk populations to learn about and access agency services and benefits?
 - a. Who is most affected and how?
 - b. What specific barriers exist?
2. What new outreach strategies and service delivery changes is SSA planning or exploring to increase awareness and access to agency services by at risk populations?
3. What is SSA's timetable for implementing specific outreach strategies and service delivery changes to increase awareness and access to agency services by at risk populations?
4. How will SSA evaluate the new outreach strategies and service delivery changes?
 - a. What goals will SSA set and what metrics will SSA track?
 - b. How will SSA seek feedback from groups representing seniors and people with disabilities, social service providers, legal practitioners, and other external experts and from SSA front-line staff and managers?

5. Who is leading and participating in the SSA workgroup on outreach to at risk populations (please identify names, titles, and agency components)?
6. Does SSA seek additional resources or authority to ensure robust and effective outreach and services for at risk seniors, people with disabilities, and survivors during the COVID-19 pandemic?

During the COVID-19 crisis, Social Security and Supplemental Security Income are more important than ever, and it is vital that all eligible Americans receive their SSA benefits and access agency services to meet their basic needs. Please respond to this request by December 11, 2020.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
Ranking Member
Committee on Finance
U.S. Senate



John B. Larson
Chairman
Subcommittee on Social Security
Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives

/s/

Sherrod Brown
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Social Security, Pensions,
and Family Policy
Committee on Finance
U.S. Senate



Danny K. Davis
Chairman
Subcommittee on Worker and Family Support
Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives

/s/

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
Ranking Member
Special Committee on Aging
U.S. Senate