United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 24, 2025

The Honorable Frank Bisignano
Commissioner
Social Security Administration
6401 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21235

Commissioner Bisignano:

We write to express concern over the Social Security Administration's (SSA) recent efforts implementing artificial intelligence (AI) programs on its phone systems that have worsened Americans' access to Social Security services. These AI programs, which the agency deployed with little consultation with Congress, advocates, or other key stakeholders, appear to have been developed in haste and represent a troubling pattern that if continued, would significantly impede Americans' ability to access their Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits.

As Senators Wyden and Crapo wrote to then-Commissioner O'Malley in August 2024[1], AI can be a helpful tool to simplify some workloads, but AI is not a panacea for all challenges facing SSA. SSA is entrusted with ensuring accurate and timely payment of more than $1 trillion in Social Security and SSI benefit payments to over 73 million of seniors, individuals with disabilities, and their families each year. Considering the agency's important mission, it is critical that SSA is responsibly deploying any technology system, including AI. For example, whether incorporating newer technology like generative AI to improve customer experience and increase efficiency or leveraging predictive AI to provide disability examiners support in the disability determination process, it is critical that SSA meaningfully engage stakeholders, including its customers and employees, the advocacy community, and members of Congress, throughout the entire process to avoid harm to claimants and beneficiaries.

The agency's hasty AI rollouts on its National 1-800 Number phone system and the phone system for its 1,200 field offices, which resulted in significant impediments for Americans simply trying to access their earned benefits, demonstrate our concerns. In April, SSA announced it would be deploying an anti-fraud AI algorithm to verify the identity of callers seeking to file for benefits on its National 1-800 Number, arguing—without providing any evidence—that its telephone service was rife with fraud. The change would have held claims filed over the phone for three days to run the antifraud program and evaluate the caller's background. However, the proposal was scrapped shortly after implementation after the system found it identified *two claims* out of over 110,000 as potentially fraudulent. Moreover, the new program slowed claim processing by 25 percent and led to a "degradation of public service".[2] As

---

[1] https://www.finance.senate.gov/chairmans-news/wyden-crapo-seek-details-on-ai-safeguards-in-social-security
[2] https://www.nextgov.com/digital-government/2025/05/doge-went-looking-phone-fraud-ssa-and-found-almost-none/405346/?oref=ng-author-river

we have previously raised with former Acting Commissioner Dudek, [3] SSA deployed this product with virtually no input from Congress, advocacy groups, or members of the public. The deployment also appeared to contradict recommendations from agency experts.[4] Only after significant public outcry did SSA decide to pare back its policy. To date, SSA has yet to provide us any evidence or analysis demonstrating the need to change its policy from its pre-March anti-fraud measures. However, public reporting showed the AI tool only flagged a handful of cases out of hundreds of thousands of calls as possibly fraudulent, and the AI tool slowed retirement claims processing by 25 percent, leading to a "degradation of public service".[5]

In addition to deploying an ineffective anti-fraud tool, SSA debuted a new AI-based chatbot[6] feature for its National 1-800 phone system in April and is in the process of implementing it for the agency's 1,200 field offices by August 2025. Again, this tool was reportedly deployed with limited pilot testing, and SSA did not solicit input from key stakeholders. As a result, the outcome was more of the same: news reporting illustrated significant technological challenges, including an audio clip of a caller repeatedly asking to speak with a live agent to no avail.[7] We have also received reports of service issues from constituents, advocates and key stakeholders, such as the chatbot responding to a different question than what the caller had asked or incorrectly disconnecting the call before the caller's questions had been answered.

We highlight these recent cases to illustrate our concerns that the agency, under this administration, appears to be ill-equipped to develop and deploy AI. To date, it appears SSA has failed to adhere to basic IT modernization guidelines, such as conducting pilot projects to test feasibility and performance and solicit feedback from users and customers. Moreover, SSA has failed to effectively communicate its implementation plans prospectively to Congress or the public, despite repeated requests for such information. This lack of communication from your agency undermines its efforts to improve services by sowing chaos and confusion, which breeds distrust in the agency and its leadership. If SSA cannot learn from its mistakes in incorporating AI into basic telephone services for beneficiaries, we are concerned that SSA will make even bigger mistakes in incorporating AI into higher-risk tasks, particularly in roles that could jeopardize Americans' financial security.

Therefore, SSA must implement effective guidelines for procuring, deploying, and monitoring all of its AI systems to mitigate the risks associated with using this technology across such important programs. Under Commissioner O'Malley's tenure, SSA developed a comprehensive AI policy to develop and evaluate AI "in a manner that fosters public trust and confidence and safeguards privacy." We believe it is necessary to build on the progress he made and follow those guidelines.

As the Senate committee with jurisdiction over the Social Security and SSI programs, we have a responsibility to ensure SSA pays the right benefit amount to the right person at the right time,

[3] https://www.gillibrand.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/2025.04.08-DOGE-Attacks-on-SSA-Letter-1.pdf

[4] https://popular.info/p/exclusive-memo-details-trump-plan?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

[5] https://www.nextgov.com/digital-government/2025/05/doge-went-looking-phone-fraud-ssa-and-found-almost-none/405346/?oref=ng-homepage-river

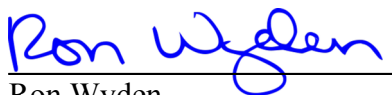[6] https://www.ssa.gov/news/press/releases/2025/#2025-04-29:~:text=Modernizing%20Telephone%20Services

[7] https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/05/16/doge-social-security-musk-trump-cuts/

provides the public with the level of customer service they expect, and is a responsible steward of taxpayer dollars, including overseeing SSA's development and adoption of emerging technology like AI. To further our understanding of how SSA will change this reckless pattern of hasty AI systems rollouts, and instead properly implement and use AI systems moving forward, we request that you respond to the following questions in writing by July 18, 2025:

1. Please provide a detailed description of the new AI-based chatbot, including how it determines whether it has successfully answered a caller's questions before hanging up?

2. What metrics is SSA using to determine whether this AI-based chatbot is successful at improving service delivery at the National 1-800 Number?

3. What metrics did SSA use to evaluate the successes or challenges of this AI-based chatbot before rolling it out nationwide to field offices?

4. What stakeholders, especially those who represent beneficiaries and employees, were consulted pre- and post-deployment of this AI-based chatbot?

5. Is SSA planning to procure, develop, or implement any new AI systems this year? If so, please list and provide a detailed description of these AI systems, their expected implementation dates, how they are expected to improve service delivery, and what steps SSA will be taking to prevent disruptions to services during the transition.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. If you have any questions, please contact Sam Conchuratt with the Senate Finance Committee at (202) 224-4515.

Sincerely,

Ron Wyden
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Committee
on Finance

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator