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Nominee for Commissioner – Social Security Administration
Committee on Finance – United States Senate

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Chairman Wyden, Ranking Member Crapo, and members of the Committee, thank you for holding this hearing.

I would like to thank Senator Cardin and former Senator Mikulski for their kind introductions and their outstanding service to our country and to the state of Maryland. I want to thank President Biden for his trust in me. Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Judge Katie Curran O'Malley, and my children, Grace, Tara, William and Jack for their steadfast support in this challenge, and in every other call to public service which our family has answered.

When I was a boy, I was taught by my parents — children of the Great Depression, young people tested by their service in World War II — that the greatness of our country is found in the care and concern we show for one another — especially those who are sick, those who are old, those who are lonely, those who are living with disabilities, children; our neighbors who would otherwise go hungry.

Social Security is the most far-reaching and important act of social and economic justice that the people of the United States have ever enacted. For tens of millions of Americans across our country, Social Security is the difference between living with dignity or living in poverty.

For eighty-eight years — without ever missing a single benefit payment — Social Security has strived to provide the right amount, to the right person, at the right time. And for the long arc of its history, Social Security has done so with a high degree of accuracy.

But today, for all its historic strengths, we must acknowledge that Social Security faces a customer service crisis.

The truth is, today, the Social Security Administration is serving a 50 percent increase in beneficiary customers with the same levels of staffing they had in 1995.

Today, a senior citizen who calls the 800 number of the Social Security Administration will face an average hold time of 37 long minutes.

Today, an American in need of disability benefits will wait 220 days for an initial decision, and perhaps as long as two years for an appeal.

This is not the greatness of America. This is not acceptable.

If someone wants a face-to-face meeting with a Social Security employee to claim their benefits, they should be able to get one.

If you are a person already living with a severe disability, you shouldn't have to be dragged through two years of "due process" to receive the benefits for which you have already spent a lifetime working.

We can and we must do better as a nation, and as an agency. I believe President Biden nominated me for this position because I have the leadership skills, the management skills, and the experience — needed at this moment — to lead this organization forward.

As a mayor, I learned there is no Democratic or Republican way to fill a pothole. As a governor, I learned the biggest challenges can only be tackled with bipartisan consensus. But, as both a mayor and as a governor, I developed a discipline for harnessing data and information technology in ways that got the best out of large, siloed organizations of people that many — inside and outside of government — thought too unwieldy, too slow, or too steeped in excuses to change.

Despite the challenges the agency faces, I have no doubt whatsoever that the hard-working, patriotic, and dedicated men and women of the Social Security Administration of the United States are up to this moment. And so am I.

With your consent and confirmation, it would be the honor of a lifetime to lead Social Security's outstanding public servants forward, together, in such an important mission. And it would be a great privilege to be able to provide each of you — as our nation's elected policymakers — with the best information you need to make the decisions necessary for the long-term strength and well-being of Social Security for the years ahead.

With deep humility, I look forward to hearing your advice, answering your questions, and earning your consent.

Thank you.