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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3205

February 14, 2025

Michelle King
Acting Commissioner
Social Security Administration
6401 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21235

Dear Acting Commissioner King,

I am writing to express my concern regarding reports that the Social Security Administration (SSA) will be closing the White Plains, New York, hearing office on May 31, 2025, with no plans to open an alternative location.

The White Plains hearing office is located in Westchester County and provides services to constituents in seven counties, including Westchester, Rockland, Putnam, Orange, Dutchess, Ulster, and Sullivan counties. As the only hearing office in the lower Hudson Valley region, its closure will negatively impact thousands of constituents who reside in these seven counties. If SSA does not open an alternative site, beneficiaries will be required to travel between 24 and 135 miles to be serviced by the closest offices in New York City, Albany, New Jersey, and Connecticut. Travel by private vehicle or public transportation to any of these alternative locations would pose greater hardship for constituents, while also significantly increasing the costs and time associated with travel.

To date, the White Plains office has approximately 2,000 cases pending, with individuals waiting almost eight months for a redetermination hearing. Access to SSA's hearing offices is critical for those who were denied eligibility for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Initial denials occur fairly frequently in the disability determination process, with many individuals receiving an initial denial and ultimately receiving approval for benefits.

Apart from the impact that this closure will have on those who are serviced by the White Plains office, I am also concerned about the employees who work at this location. At a time when President Trump is trying to gut the federal workforce, this closure would affect the staff who strive every day to provide the American people with high-quality service.

Maintaining and improving the services that SSA offers to the public is essential to ensuring that Americans can access their earned benefits. Over the past decade, SSA has faced stagnant budgets and an increasing workload, while it has also closed field offices and seen the deterioration of in-person and phone services shifting more interactions online. Specifically, since 2010, SSA's customer service budget has fallen 17 percent (adjusted for inflation) and staffing at SSA is at a 25-year low. Despite this and despite pleas from Democrats in the House and Senate, Republicans have resisted increases to SSA's operational budget, and have in fact, suggested cuts. Current estimates indicate that if SSA funding is cut back below 2022 levels, the agency will be forced to lay off

additional staff and add to an already large backlog. Former Commissioner Martin O'Malley worked to rectify the issues at SSA, but change cannot be achieved overnight, and further cuts to staff and services endanger SSA and benefit delivery further.

Therefore, I urge you to consider securing an alternative hearing office location in the lower Hudson Valley and request a written response by March 3, 2025, to address the following questions and concerns:

1. Individuals are already waiting almost eight months for a hearing in the White Plains office. How will this closure impact wait times? What steps is the Administration taking to reduce wait times?
2. Given that many constituents who have open cases lack dependable internet access and are without dependable personal transportation, how will SSA facilitate hearings and related services for these constituents?
3. SSA already operates local field offices in Middletown, Orange County; Monticello, Sullivan County; New Rochelle and Peekskill, Westchester County; Poughkeepsie, Dutchess County; and West Nyack, Rockland County. Would SSA provide accommodations to allow constituents to participate in hearings at their closest local field office or another remote site in the lower Hudson Valley? What additional resources or funding would be needed to secure an alternative site for SSA hearings in the region?
4. Please share how the decision to close the White Plains hearing office was made. Did the Administration's directive to the General Services Administration to revoke all leases for federal offices nationwide have an impact on SSA's decision to close the White Plains hearing office? Does the Administration have plans to close additional SSA offices?

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

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