

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

November 3, 2021

Dr. Kilolo Kijakazi
Acting Commissioner
Social Security Administration
6401 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21235

Dear Acting Commissioner Kijakazi:

As you know, the United States Postal Service (USPS) recently announced new service standards for first class mail. The Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittees on Oversight, Social Security, and Worker and Family Support are trying to determine the impact of the new standards, which include increased time-in-transit standards, on the Social Security Administration (SSA). In particular, we want to understand the impact on those who rely on SSA for Social Security and Supplemental Security Income benefits and on the agency's ability to process applications and appeals promptly.

SSA mails an estimated 350 million documents each year to the public, including to individuals receiving or applying for benefits.¹ Mailed documents contain vital information and include: *Social Security Statements* to inform workers of their future Social Security benefits; Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) notices to inform beneficiaries of annual benefit changes; SSA-1099 forms used by beneficiaries to file taxes; and time-sensitive notices for individuals applying for benefits, such as information about their right to appeal a denial. Individuals rely on these mailed documents to make important life decisions, such as how much to save and when to retire, and to meet deadlines for submitting information in support of benefit applications.

In addition, individuals lose rights, such as the right to appeal a benefit denial or the right to continue receiving an existing benefit while an appeal is pending, if SSA does not receive their timely response. The loss of these rights can be devastating, particularly for people of color, women, and other individuals who are disproportionately likely to rely on SSA benefits for retirement or for financial security in the event of their own disability or a family member's death.

¹ Social Security Administration, *Fifth Annual Report on Removing Social Security Numbers from Mailed Documents Public Law 115-59, Fiscal Year 2021*. Available at <https://www.ssa.gov/legislation/Removing%20Social%20Security%20Numbers%20from%20Mailed%20Documents%20FY%202021.pdf>

We would appreciate your answers to the questions listed below by November 24, 2021.

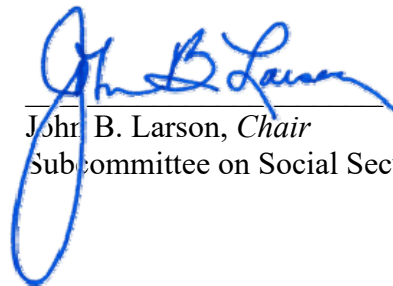
1. How many letters/notices to applicants and beneficiaries (including their representatives and representative payees) have been sent by SSA each year since 2018, and how much has been spent on postage? How has this changed throughout the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How many letters/notices include a deadline or response date by which the applicant or beneficiary must act or respond? Please identify which of these deadlines are provided for in statutory language.
3. How many pieces of mail has SSA received each year since 2018 from applicants and beneficiaries (including their representatives and representative payees)? How has this changed throughout the COVID-19 pandemic?
4. How many benefit payments have been mailed each year since 2018 on behalf of SSA?
5. How much has been spent annually on postage by SSA since 2018 for all purposes (not only for letters/notices to beneficiaries), and what is the postage budget for FY2022?
6. To what extent will delayed mail delivery impact SSA, its beneficiaries, and its applicants (please include any estimates of additional time for mailings related to the expected delays), and what options are under consideration by the agency to address delays, if any?
7. Describe any discussions with the USPS related to mail rates/pricing and delivery times for mail from and to SSA within the last year.

Your assistance with our review is appreciated.

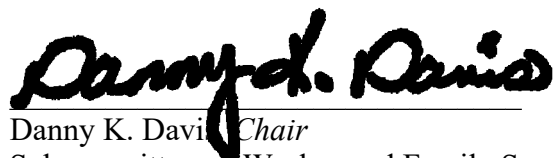
Sincerely,



Bill Pascrell, Jr., *Chair*
Subcommittee on Oversight



John B. Larson, *Chair*
Subcommittee on Social Security



Danny K. Davis, *Chair*
Subcommittee on Worker and Family Support