

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 13, 2020

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

Dear Commissioner Saul:

We are deeply concerned about the coronavirus response thus far at the Social Security Administration (SSA).

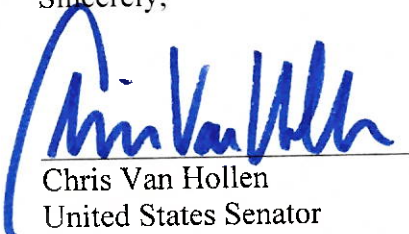
Your workers have raised concerns to us about SSA impeding the ability of employees to be telework-ready. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has directed agencies to maximize telework in their continuity of operations plans, and to reassess telework eligibility factors to determine if more employees can be eligible for telework.¹ Please provide us with the number of additional positions, if any, that SSA has made newly eligible for telework since January 31, 2020, when Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex M. Azar II declared a public health emergency for the coronavirus in the entire United States.²

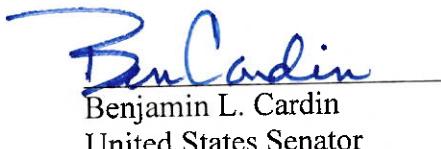
Today, the Office of Management and Budget encouraged agencies to maximize telework flexibility for high-risk populations and areas.³ We strongly urge SSA to grant telework requests now, to the greatest extent practicable, to all employees who are able to perform their duties outside of the office. SSA should also maximize the availability and awareness of online, telephone and other remote services that can be used in lieu of in-person meetings and hearings. At an absolute minimum, SSA should immediately rescind its recent cuts to telework programs for Operations, Analytics Review and Oversight, Hearings Operations, and other components. Cutting telework during a public health emergency makes no sense.

Finally, we urge you to meet with the labor organizations representing your employees and to work collaboratively with them to respond to this public health emergency. Your workers have concerns and ideas that deserve your full attention and consideration. Hearing from the labor organizations representing your workforce reaffirms for us why the law states, "labor organizations and collective bargaining in the civil service are in the public interest."⁴

Thank you for your attention to these matters, and we look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,


Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator


Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator


Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

¹ Office of Personnel Management. *Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Additional Guidance*. March 7, 2020.

² Department of Health and Human Services. *Secretary Azar Declares Public Health Emergency for United States for 2019 Novel Coronavirus*. January 31, 2020.

³ Office of Management and Budget. *Updated Guidance on Telework Flexibilities in Response to Coronavirus*. March 12, 2020.

⁴ 5 U.S.C. § 7101.