

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1304

October 21, 2020

The Honorable Andrew Saul
Commissioner
Social Security Administration
6401 Security Boulevard
Woodlawn, MD. 21207

Dear Commissioner Saul:

I write to inquire about the Social Security Administration's (SSA) strategies for reopening facilities that have been closed due to COVID-19, and its plans for resuming operations. I ask that the SSA work to ensure that any effort to reopen facilities will be based on scientific data and incorporate a clear and comprehensive operations plan to protect employees and their families.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created many workforce challenges, including many challenges for federal agencies like the SSA. Amidst these challenges, we mourn the loss of more than 218,000 Americans who have died from COVID-19, and we watch as the number of deaths continue to rise. The SSA is not immune to these workforce issues, or to this pandemic, and it has already experienced this devastation first-hand.

As the SSA develops reopening plans, I ask that you consider the consequences associated with reopening SSA offices, including whether employees must use public transit to get to and from work as well as the ability to effectively social distance and implement extensive, regular cleaning protocols in SSA offices. I have received concerning reports that in the middle of a global pandemic, when physical space between individuals is critical, the SSA is moving forward with plans to downsize its office space—including in Chicago. Your ongoing operations are critical to the safety and security of America's seniors, who are facing disproportionate burdens from the pandemic including isolation and economic strains. I urge you to prioritize the safety and well-being of your employees, their families, and Social Security recipients.

I request additional information on the SSA's plan to reopen facilities and resume operations. I urge you to detail how the safety of your employees and their families, based on scientific data, will be addressed as well as any cleaning and social distancing protocols that will be implemented. The employees of your agency, many of whom are my constituents, are counting on it.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator