

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

January 22, 2019

Barbara Stewart
Chief Executive Officer
Corporation for National and Community Service
250 E Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Ms. Stewart,

We write to share our concerns and request additional information regarding the Corporation for National & Community Service (CNCS) Transformation and Sustainability Plan.

Each year, CNCS engages more than 325,000 national service participants at more than 50,000 locations across the country to empower our nation's most valuable resource – its citizens. It is the leading provider of grants that support and promote national service and volunteerism.

CNCS was formed as a partnership between the Federal Government and state governors. The unique combination of direct CNCS staff outreach to local stakeholders and coordination with State Service Commissions (SSCs) through CNCS state offices plays a critical role in ensuring that federal national service funding responds to local needs and drives local results.

But the reorganization plan calls for closing CNCS state offices across the country, including in Illinois, in favor of a regional model. According to the plan, Illinois is slated to become part of the “Midwest Region” along with four other states and served by a regional office in Columbus, Ohio.

Instead of four dedicated full-time CNCS staff located in Chicago with field knowledge, opportunity for local input, and outreach capacity, Illinois will be served by an unknown number of CNCS staff split among five states, with potentially little to no knowledge of Illinois, and located two states away. Based on Fiscal Year 2017, the average distance from CNCS grantees in the proposed Midwest Region to their current respective state office was 120 miles. That distance, on average, increases to 252 miles under the plan. In Illinois, the average distance to Columbus for CNCS grantees would be 373 miles – more than triple the distance to Chicago. CNCS Grantee East Saint Louis School District 189, for example, is 414 miles away from Columbus.

Prior to your confirmation, you discussed with Senator Durbin the difficult issues facing Illinois and Chicago including youth trauma and violence that has garnered national attention. In your previous experience in Chicago, you've seen these challenges up close and how well-spent resources can make a difference in struggling communities. But you're proposing to remove staff from Chicago at a time when additional federal resources, not fewer, are needed to effectively respond to youth trauma, violence, and their underlying causes in the largest city in the proposed Midwest Region. We fail to see how this fits with Goal 6 of the plan to "align [y]our workforces and workplaces to better serve [y]our customers, meet evolving needs, and ensure efficient use of taxpayer dollars."

In the June 8, 2018, submission for the public comment period, a Serve Illinois Commissioner asked "What metrics will be used to support and justify a reduction in field presence and staff" which will allow CNCS to meet this goal. Despite the concerning fast-moving pace of the planned reorganization, this basic question and lack of clear justification for decisions—including selection of regional office locations—remain.

As such, we request responses to the following:

1. How will a regional model improve CNCS outcomes? Please provide any supporting analysis and evidence.
2. Please provide a list of the locations of Listening Sessions held by CNCS to solicit feedback on the Plan. Why was Chicago chosen as a Listening Session location?
3. How was the total number of regional offices determined and why? Please provide any supporting analysis and data.
4. What criteria were used to identify potential regional office locations?
5. Please provide the assessment of each potential regional office location for the proposed Midwest Region.
6. How many CNCS staff are currently located in the Illinois office?
7. How many cumulative CNCS staff are currently located in state offices in states making up the proposed Midwest Region?
8. How many total staff does CNCS intend to have in the proposed Midwest Region office?
9. Please provide a timeline for the proposed closing of the Illinois office and opening of the Midwest Regional office in Columbus, Ohio.
10. When does CNCS expect the proposed Midwest Regional office to be fully staffed?
11. Please provide a copy of the proposed organizational chart between SSCs, CNCS regional offices, and the CNCS national office under the Plan.
12. Please provide a crosswalk demonstrating how each responsibility currently handled by state offices will be accounted for under the Plan.
13. Under the plan, what input will SSCs have with regional offices and the CNCS national office regarding programming in their state?
14. How will the regional offices deliver Training/Technical Assistance to local stakeholders in a timely and effective manner?

At a time when our country's need for national service is at an all-time high, this reorganization appears to take several steps backward. We appreciate your consideration and respectfully request a reply no later than February 1. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



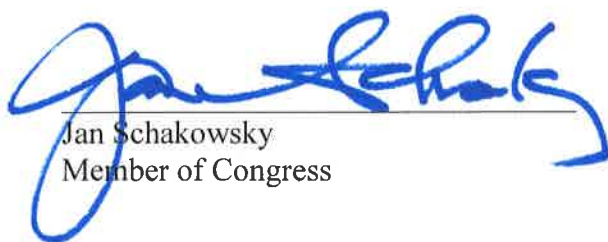
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Daniel W. Lipinski
Member of Congress



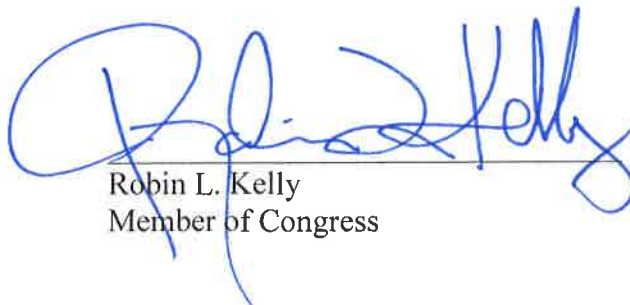
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