



CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

STATEMENT BY

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BEFORE THE

HOUSE DEMOCRATIC STEERING AND POLICY COMMITTEE

HEARING ON SOCIAL SECURITY

APRIL 1, 2025



Good afternoon, distinguished members of the committee.

My name is Rennie Glasgow. I have devoted 15 years of my career to helping people access the benefits they have earned through the Social Security Administration at the Schenectady office in New York.

I began my career as a Claims Specialist and have advanced to become a Claims Technical Expert, handling the most complex cases. Every day, I assist members of my community, seniors, disabled individuals, and survivors, who depend on these benefits for their livelihood. I am proud of my work ensuring people receive the benefits to which they are entitled. I am a proud federal employee and a proud member of AFGE.

Today I appear before you as an AFGE member because Social Security is being deliberately sabotaged. Our Schenectady office has recently lost seven employees. This represents a devastating sabotage of institutional knowledge and experience. It takes a minimum of two years for an employee to be fully trained in our programs, and we have essentially thrown decades of collective experience out the door.

For the public, the consequences of this sabotage are severe. A grandmother living in Saratoga Springs now faces waiting times two or three times longer than before just to get someone to answer the phone for a simple address change. Alternatively, she must travel to our local office and spend an entire day waiting for assistance.

Social Security staffing was already at a 50-year low before these cuts. Now, service delivery has become extremely challenging, and Americans will struggle to access their earned benefits. This is another form of sabotage against vulnerable citizens. While the public suffers from inadequate service, seven of my dedicated colleagues worry about how they will provide for their families. Recent changes to our operational procedures have created even more obstacles for the public to access benefits. For example, the implementation of a two-step identification process means individuals who experience issues logging onto their online account will now have to travel to an office and verify their identity in person. This policy change alone will result in 75,000 to 80,000 more in-person visits to already overwhelmed SSA offices.

Additionally, modifications to the claims and Social Security card enumeration process will force even more people to visit field offices in person. While more services will require going to an office, these offices are being closed in communities across the country. In New York, offices in White Plains and Poughkeepsie are targeted for closure, which will force seniors and disabled individuals to travel long distances just to get to an office; offices that are not prepared or able to meet the surge in demand.

A critical policy change that just went into effect requires the Social Security Administration to take 100% of someone's retirement or disability benefits for any overpayment, instead of the prior limit of 10%. Many overpayments occur because understaffing has made it difficult, if not impossible, to conduct integrity reviews that would prevent overpayments before they happen. This change will create severe financial hardship for many Americans.

This policy shift also severely increases workload at field offices. The change will trigger a flood of phone calls and in-person visits from desperate beneficiaries seeking relief from having their entire benefit withheld. While employees struggle to meet public service demands, we also have to spend valuable hours responding to administrative demands like "fork-in-the-road" emails and documenting our weekly activities. Activities that were already tracked and quantifiable.

These obstacles will prevent people, your constituents who have worked hard and paid into this system, from getting their Social Security benefits. Americans deserve better than to have their earned benefits placed out of reach due to deliberate sabotage of the system.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I welcome any questions you may have.