

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 2, 2022

Tammy L. Whitcomb
Inspector General
United States Postal Service
1735 N. Lynn Street
Arlington, VA 22209-2020

Dear Ms. Whitcomb:

We are writing to request that you conduct a review of USPS performance and operations with regard to Free Matter for the Blind or Other Physically Handicapped Persons. This program enables mail to be sent without charge if it is for the use of people who cannot read conventional print due to a disability. While the Postal Service is generally funded by revenues collected from postal customers, Congress appropriates a limited amount of funding to the Postal Service Fund to support certain programs, including free mail for the blind.

At a hearing of the Financial Services and General Government Appropriations Subcommittee on July 13, 2021, Ms. Rania Dima testified about delays she experienced with free mail for the blind that were significantly worse than what she experienced for other mail, even though USPS is supposed to process free mail for the blind like First-Class Mail.¹ These delays impeded Ms. Dima's process of relearning to read after she lost her sight, including to read her own testimony at the hearing. According to the National Federation of the Blind, these delays are a widespread problem that, "not only has a detrimental effect on the lives of blind and print-disabled Americans, but is also creating a loss of taxpayer dollars since digital players, Braille displays, and other valuable equipment are stuck in the post office, never reaching the people who need it."²


For those reasons, we ask that you review the procedures used by USPS to accept, process, and deliver Free Matter for the Blind or Other Physically Handicapped Persons, and provide recommendations to fix any problems identified by that review. The Postal Service does not track delivery performance for free mail for the blind separately from First-Class Mail, so as part of this review, please conduct an analysis comparing the delivery times for similar mail pieces sent via free mail for the blind and via First-Class Mail.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.


¹ Rania Dima (2021). *A Hearing to Review the FY 2022 Budget Request for the USPS Office of Inspector General and USPS Service Issues*. <https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Dima%20Testimony2.pdf>

² National Federation of the Blind (2021). *Resolution 2021-05: Regarding Mail Problems that Interfere with NLS Services*. <https://nfb.org/resources/speeches-and-reports/resolutions/2021-resolutions>

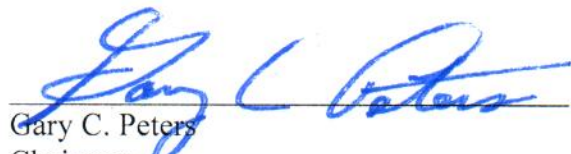
Sincerely,




Chris Van Hollen
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Financial Services and General Government



Cindy Hyde-Smith
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Financial Services and General Government



Gary C. Peters
Chairman
Senate Committee on Homeland Security
and Governmental Affairs



Rob Portman
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Homeland Security
and Governmental Affairs