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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

September 18, 2017

The Honorable Megan J. Brennan
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza
Washington, DC 20260

Dear Ms. Brennan:

We write to request that the United States Postal Service (Postal Service) take immediate action to develop and implement formal training requirements for managers at Processing & Distribution Centers (P&DCs) and to give our offices regular briefings on their progress in this effort. We have great concern about the Postal Service Inspector General's (OIG's) August 10, 2017 audit report, which states that the Postal Service has not been accurately reporting delayed mail. These delays cost customers and businesses valuable time and put an estimated \$85.1 million of Postal Service revenue at risk. This comes at a time when the Postal Service is suffering severe financial difficulties due to declines in mail volume even after a decrease in the price of its products.

Among the OIG's most alarming findings was that because of a lack of management training and oversight, mail pieces are being processed after the established cut-off time and delayed mail is going unrecorded, thereby causing daily mail condition reports to be extremely inaccurate. When extrapolated nationwide, the OIG found that the number of delayed mail pieces was staggering - approximately 2 billion pieces over a one-year span. Moreover, certain reporting practices that capture the number of pieces of delayed mail were not mandatory, so this problem likely persisted for a substantial period of time.

These practices have wide-ranging implications for Postal Service management, who, as the OIG notes, make critical decisions on staffing, mail processing equipment use, and the transportation of mail based on this data. Moreover, these decisions affect the Postal Service's system-wide decisions, including the shuttering of P&DCs across the country, which has significantly affected timely delivery to the rural postal customers in our states. We suspect that the problem of inaccurate reporting of delayed mail is potentially widespread and could disproportionately affect rural states such as Missouri and North Dakota.

In Missouri, for example, we have received numerous photographic examples of mail sitting in bins waiting to be delivered that have already been recorded as delivered in the Postal Service's system. In North Dakota, we have long tried to reconcile the differences between what we have heard from hundreds of customers on the ground regarding service performance through

the Fix My Mail initiative and the Postal Service's data. While we have certainly made significant progress from where we started in North Dakota, we are certain that this disconnect on service performance could be further improved.

The mail continues to be a vital lifeline in rural America and the dependence on this service as a way to deliver goods as well as connect individuals, communities, and businesses demands that it be a reliable and accurate mode of delivery. This cannot happen if we do not understand the full scope of a postal customer's mail experience in real time. As referenced in a Government Accountability (GAO) request sent by our offices earlier this year, it is critical to know the accountability measures the Postal Service has in place to make sure employees are collecting service performance data as accurately as possible. While it remains crucial for us to get these answers, we believe that the strong findings in this OIG report inform the need for immediate actions.

In order to shore up the reliability – and profitability – of the Postal Service, we respectfully request that the Postal Service take immediate action to develop and implement formal training requirements for managers at P&DCs, and that we receive regular briefings on your progress. As the Postal Service awaits its new Internal Visibility mail tracking system, this supervisor training is critical. We appreciated management's receptiveness to this particular OIG recommendation, and hope that the Postal Service will prioritize this training. Finally, we strongly urge you to work with the OIG to gauge the effectiveness of this training by measuring outcomes while also increasing the scrutiny of P&DC supervisors.

We appreciate your consideration of our request and stand ready to assist you in your efforts to help the Postal Service best serve the American public and put it onto financially stable ground for decades to come.

Sincerely,



Claire McCaskill
Ranking Member



Heidi Heitkamp
Ranking Member
Regulatory Affairs &
Federal Management Subcommittee