

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 5, 2015

The Honorable Carolyn Colvin  
Acting Commissioner of Social Security  
Social Security Administration  
6401 Security Boulevard  
Woodlawn, MD 21207

Dear Commissioner Colvin:

I write out of concern about the backlog of disability appeals hearing requests in my state and across the country. While my constituents have the right to appeal unfavorable determinations related to their disability claims, I continue to hear from individuals who have waited more than a year for a hearing.

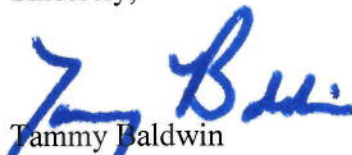
Currently, the average time between the date a hearing is requested and when it is held is 20 months for cases assigned to the Office of Disability Adjudication and Review (ODAR) in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. This means, on average, individuals wait more than one and half years to have their cases reviewed. Wait times at the ODAR hearing office in Madison average 16 months—in line with the national average. Still, that is too long to wait for an appeal for disability benefits.

Since 2007, the Social Security Administration has implemented a number of initiatives focused on the Agency's goals to reduce the hearings backlog and average wait time to just under nine months. According to the Office of the Inspector General report released last week, SSA has not reached either of those goals and has not published a long-term, multi-year strategy to address the growing backlog and increasing wait times.

I am encouraged that when testifying before Congress earlier this year, you shared that the Social Security Administration continues to look into ways to process hearing requests as efficiently as possible. Still, I would like to know what is being done to address the growing backlog of disability appeals hearings nationwide. I would also like to know what is being done short-term to address the issue in Milwaukee, where wait times far exceed the national average.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Tammy Baldwin  
U.S. Senator