

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 8, 2024

Mr. Louis DeJoy
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20260

Board of Governors
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20260

Dear Postmaster General DeJoy and U.S. Postal Service Board of Governors:

We call on you to pause planned changes to the U.S. Postal Service's (USPS) processing and delivery network under the "Delivering for America" plan, until you request and receive a comprehensive Advisory Opinion from the Postal Regulatory Commission to fully study the potential impacts of these changes.

USPS is moving forward swiftly with plans to consolidate and alter its facilities across the country, making irrevocable changes to its processing and delivery network which links all communities. This plan includes moving mail processing further away from local communities, by transferring operations out of local facilities ("Local Processing Centers" and Delivery Units) and into more distant hubs ("Regional Processing and Distribution Centers" and "Sorting and Delivery Centers").¹ The plan also includes "local transportation optimization," an initiative that cuts the number of truck trips and mail collections at USPS facilities, causing mail to sit overnight in local offices. USPS has begun to implement this change without notifying the public, causing critical delays for mail that requires overnight delivery.²

We are concerned about the impacts these changes have had so far, and the potential impacts that further changes could have. In regions where USPS has implemented significant changes, on-time mail delivery has declined. In addition, it is not clear these changes will

¹ U.S. Postal Service, *Delivering for America, Second-Year Progress Report* (Apr. 27, 2023) (<https://about.usps.com/what/strategic-plans/delivering-for-america/assets/usps-dfa-two-year-report.pdf>); U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General, *Effectiveness of the New Regional Processing and Distribution Center in Richmond, VA* (March 28, 2024) (<https://www.uspsoig.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2024-04/23-161-r24.pdf>); *Review of USPS Sorting and Delivery Centers Opened in Quarters 1 and 2 of FY 2023* (Sept. 12, 2023) (<https://www.uspsoig.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2023-09/23-062-r23.pdf>).

² Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Hearing on Oversight of the United States Postal Service, 118th Cong. (Apr. 16, 2024) (S. Hrg. 118-XX); *Effectiveness of the New Regional Processing and Distribution Center in Richmond, VA*, *supra* note 1.

improve efficiency or costs.³ Despite these concerns, USPS has moved forward with announcing and approving additional facility changes across the country.⁴ The nature of these changes creates concerns that local and rural service could be degraded. For example, USPS proposals to remove all outbound mail operations from local processing facilities seem to particularly harm local mail – since mail sent to a nearby locality would first have to go through a far-away processing facility, often in another state. “Local transportation optimization” has also caused disproportionate impacts on rural areas. In some rural communities, it has eliminated the possibility of overnight delivery for critical mail like medications and laboratory tests.⁵ Taken together, these changes have a nationwide scope and would affect service across the country.

We call on USPS to pause all changes, pending a full study of this plan by its regulator. While USPS claims these changes overall will improve service while reducing costs, there is evidence to the contrary in locations where USPS has implemented changes so far. USPS must stop implementation, restore service in those areas where changes were implemented, and fully understand the nationwide effects of its plan on service and communities.

In particular, we urge the Postal Service to request a comprehensive Advisory Opinion from the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC), which would provide a robust and public process to study the impacts of these changes. The request and analysis must include the full scope of network changes, including the intersecting changes to facilities across the nation (conversions to Regional Processing and Distribution Centers, Sorting and Delivery Centers, and Local Processing Centers) and local transportation optimization. During a hearing before the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Postmaster General DeJoy stated that USPS would consider requesting an Advisory Opinion – and suggested that USPS may slow down “mail move” changes in 2024.⁶ Disappointingly, the Postmaster General did not commit to the scope of an Advisory Opinion, or to meaningfully stopping changes until further study is complete.

³ *Id.*; U.S. Postal Service, Service Performance (<https://about.usps.com/what/performance/service-performance/external-service-measurement.htm>).

⁴ *See, e.g.*, U.S. Postal Service, Mail Processing Facility Reviews (<https://about.usps.com/what/strategic-plans/mpfr/welcome.htm>) (accessed Apr. 30, 2024).

⁵ Numerous examples and evidence have been raised in past correspondence from Members of Congress and other sources. *See, e.g.*, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Testimony Submitted for the Record of Inspector General Tammy Hull, USPS OIG and Chairman Michael Kubayanda, Postal Regulatory Commission, *Hearing on Oversight of the United States Postal Service*, 118th Cong. (Apr. 16, 2024) (S. Hrg. 118-XX) (available at <https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/hearings/oversight-of-the-united-states-postal-service/>); Iron Mountain Daily News, *Postal service plan for UP center meets firm skepticism* (Apr. 2, 2024) (<https://www.ironmountaindailynews.com/news/local-news/2024/04/postal-service-plan-for-up-center-meets-firm-skepticism/>).

⁶ Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, *supra* note 2.

The Postal Service must promptly request a comprehensive Advisory Opinion to study the impacts of its full plan. USPS should pause all changes, including administrative approvals and on-the-ground changes, until the PRC completes this study and USPS incorporates the results. USPS must improve service immediately in areas where changes have been implemented, and restore status quo operations as much as practicable.

The Postal Service's primary responsibility is to provide timely and reliable delivery to every community across the nation. While USPS must continue adapting as an agency to remain stable and serve the public's current needs, it must proceed with caution and understand the implications of its plans in order to protect mail delivery for all communities.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



Cynthia M. Lummis
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Kevin Cramer
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
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John Barrasso
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Catherine Cortez Masto
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Steve Daines
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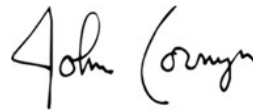
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