

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 16, 2021

Ms. Shalanda Young
Acting Director
Office of Management and Budget
1650 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20503

Ms. Kathleen McGettigan
Acting Director
Office of Personnel Management
1900 E Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20415

Ms. Katy Kale
Acting Administrator
General Services Administration
1800 F Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20405

Dear Acting Director Young, Acting Director McGettigan, and Acting Administrator Kale,

We write today to follow up on multiple letters sent regarding the operating status of federal agencies, and to reiterate the need to quickly resume pre-pandemic levels of service. Across the country, many American citizens have safely returned to in-person work, have attended school and public events, and many county and city-level government offices have fully re-opened to serve Americans in person. Unfortunately, the federal government not only has failed to follow suit, it has not yet developed a timely plan for returning to in-person service at pre-pandemic levels.

Nearly every federal agency has been operating with maximum telework policies for the better part of the past sixteen months because of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, remote work policies enacted by federal agencies have done more than limit in-person meetings and appointments for constituents seeking assistance. As liaisons between the American public and federal agencies, our staffs have often been informed that agency personnel do not have access to physical mail, cannot access certain servers for data collection, and cannot retrieve voicemails left on office phones, leaving concerns unanswered and assistance greatly delayed. The lack of access to technologies, data, and resources necessary to serve the American public has had a disproportionate impact on the mentally ill, low-income, as well as the elderly, who often do not have consistent access to email or an internet connection. While maximum telework policies were necessary during the darkest days of the pandemic, it's time to begin bringing federal employees back to the office.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the current 7-day moving average of daily new cases continues to decline. As of July 16, the 7-day average decreased by 89.6% from the highest peak, reached on January 10, 2021.¹ This is a testament to the efficacy of our vaccines, which are now widely available to Americans over the age of 12. To date, the CDC reports that at least 67.9% of adults have received at least one dose of the vaccine.²

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/covidview/index.html>

² https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#trends_dailytrendscases

On June 10, the Office of Management and Budget issued a memorandum³ to the heads of executive departments and agencies directing them to complete their planning for reentry by July 19, 2021. According to the memorandum, the agency's plan should detail how and when to return to an increased number of employees and contractors in-person to the Federal workplace, as well as the intended post-reentry personnel policies and work environment. However, OMB does not instruct agencies to include specific policies, procedures, or detailed timelines; rather they only need to submit high-level guidelines that will be used to inform decisions, and these planning documents do not need to be provided at the level of each division, office, or team across the agency. The memorandum then goes on to detail that implementation of these phased plans for reentry and post-reentry will only begin after a handful of other steps have been carried out, further casting doubt on a quick resumption of in-person duties.

The slow pace at which federal agencies are moving not only sends conflicting messages to the American public, but also deprives constituents from timely responses and much-needed assistance. With that in mind, we respectfully request that you provide us with the following information:

1. What metrics are being used to define parameters for reentry in whole or in part?
2. What metrics are being used to define essential services and how they have been sustained?
3. How are agencies factoring in national and local vaccination rates into reopening plans?
4. How are agencies factoring in local COVID-19 case rates to reopening plans?
5. How has remote work affected public inquiry and assistance response times?
6. How has remote work affected response times to Congressional inquiries?
7. What is the anticipated timeline for full reopening to pre-pandemic levels of all federal agencies?

After a year of battling the COVID-19 virus, our communities are reopening, states are relaxing mask mandates and COVID protocols, and the CDC continues to ease restriction recommendations for fully vaccinated people. The federal government has provided numerous incentives for businesses to reopen and rehire workers for in-person work, however it sends conflicting messages by the government not following its own advice. Federal agencies should lead by example, and expedite plans to resume in-person assistance to the American people.

Sincerely,




Roger Marshall, M.D.
United States Senator



Rob Portman
United States Senator



Kevin Cramer
United States Senator




John Cornyn
United States Senator

³ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/M-21-25.pdf>



Bill Hagerty
United States Senator



Cynthia Lummis
United States Senator



Mike Braun
United States Senator



Jim Inhofe
United States Senator



Josh Hawley
United States Senator



Jim Risch
United States Senator



Richard Burr
United States Senator



Bill Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senator



Marco Rubio
United States Senator