

Commissioner O'Malley Hearing Opening Statement

Thank you, Chairman Casey and Commissioner O'Malley.

Social Security is a bedrock for millions of Americans and was a key part of the Aging Committee's first hearing in 1961.

Today, the Social Security Administration has a customer service crisis.

Commissioner O'Malley, I appreciate your willingness to address this.

We have seen billions of dollars routinely lost in overpayments with painful "clawbacks" for beneficiaries and their families.

There are staggering 800 number wait times, and unprecedented backlogs for people with disabilities.

We are not keeping Social Security's promise.

The Windfall Elimination Provision and Government Pension Offset, WEP and GPO, penalize retirees for choosing public service careers.

WEP and GPO can cut benefits in half for public servants like police officers, who often supplement their service with a second career.

We need to pass the Social Security Fairness Act to eliminate these provisions.

On top of benefits cuts, WEP and GPO are so confusing that they contribute to overpayments.

This adds insult to injury, putting beneficiaries in awful positions.

The least we can do is eliminate WEP and GPO overpayments.

In Indiana, my office is increasingly handling more cases in this crisis.

It took over a year for one Hoosier, the mother of a son with Down Syndrome, to get a disability case sorted.

It wasn't resolved until a meeting between my office, the field office, and the Public Affairs Specialist.

This is not a funding issue—it's basic customer service.

The President's Budget blames agency staffing shortages.

We can't fix a customer service crisis by throwing more money at it and expecting different results.

When inflation overheats the economy, it's harder for government to hire and retain employees.

If we don't get our fiscal house in order, we won't keep our promise to millions of beneficiaries and future generations.

Our debt is out of control. Like every agency, Social Security needs to find efficiencies.

There are commonsense steps to improve customer service, like making e-signatures available and accessible on forms.

I thank the Chairman for joining me in our letter urging the Social Security Administration to comply with e-signature policies.

Commissioner O'Malley, I know you are working to promote efficiency and innovation.

There is a long road ahead. I look forward to discussing best practices to meet these challenges while protecting beneficiaries and taxpayers.

Thank you, Chairman Casey. I yield back.