

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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May 16, 2023

The Honorable Louis DeJoy
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza, S.W., Room 10300
Washington, D.C. 20260-1000

Dear Postmaster General DeJoy:

We write with continuing concerns about the United States Postal Service's (Postal Service) and United States Postal Inspection Service's (Postal Inspection Service) recent announcement regarding expanded crime prevention measures to protect Postal employees and facilities. We seek to understand how you plan to address the increasing violence against these critical federal employees as they deliver mail and packages to every home and business in the United States every day. While we applaud the Postal Service's and Postal Inspection Service's actions to finally start addressing the massive increase in postal crime and theft through the proposed crime prevention measures announced on Friday, May 12, 2023, we remain gravely concerned for the physical safety and wellbeing of our postal carriers and demand swift action. We must do more to protect our federal workforce.

According to the Associated Press, robberies of postal carriers have skyrocketed, surging 78% and resulting in nearly 500 incidents from 2021 to 2022.¹ In addition, according to Postal Inspector Service (PIS) data, from 2018 and 2021, robberies of mail carriers more than tripled, and robberies involving a gun more than quadrupled. Moreover, according to press reports, the Postal Service informed the Department of Justice that there have been more than 165 armed robberies against letter carriers from October 2021 through March 2022. If this pace holds, it would mark a 400% increase from the number of armed robberies in 2019.² NBC4 Washington's data analysis found more than 2,000 assaults or robberies against postal carriers since 2020.³ In addition, thieves have been robbing mail handlers for their universal or "arrow"

¹ *'Outraged' letter carriers demand action to stop increasing armed robberies*, AP News (May 8, 2023) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/usps-postal-carrier-robberies-d53f77fd357ba3c87d9c43bc9da33>).

² *Signed, Sealed, Snatched: Georgia State Professor and His Students Are Tracking a Thriving Underground Market for Stolen Checks*, Bloomberg (Mar. 28, 2022) (online at www.bloomberg.com/features/2022-mail-thieves-checks-scam/).

³ *Thousands of Postal Carriers Assaulted or Robbed Since 2020: USPIIS Data*, NBC4 (May 20, 2022) (online at www.nbcwashington.com/investigations/thousands-of-postal-carriers-assaulted-or-robbed-since-2020-uspis-data/3057513/).

keys that unlock mailboxes and cluster boxes—allowing for easy access to checks and other mail. A 2020 Postal Service Inspector General report found that the Postal Service’s management controls over arrow keys was ineffective, and it was not clear how many of these arrow keys were “in circulation, lost, stolen, and broken.”⁴

While most of the recent mail theft and other crimes occurred in Florida, California, Texas, and New York, a *Washington Post* report from April 30, 2022, found that check-stealing schemes using the Postal Service were on the upswing in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, particularly in Maryland.⁵ NBC4 Washington’s reporting found close to 180 incidents in the D.C. region (133 assaults and 44 robberies).⁶

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, our Postal Service workforce delivered prescription medications, paychecks, food stamps, stimulus checks, holiday and birthday gifts, rapid COVID tests, and more to homes and businesses across the country. Today, the Postal Service employs 630,000 individuals who live in every single congressional district. That workforce delivers mail to more than 163 million delivery points each day and operates more than 31,000 post offices nationwide.

Congress is committed to preserving the safety and security of our postal workers. On August 2, 2022, Democratic members of the House Oversight and Reform Committee requested the Government Accountability Office to examine the effectiveness of the Postal Service’s use and deployment of Postal Police to prevent and reduce crime. The Government Operations Subcommittee also held a hearing on September 7, 2022, to assess the Postal Service’s mail delivery performance, worker safety, and efforts to reduce mail theft. During the hearing, Frank Albergo, national president of the Postal Police Officers Association testified,

“The Postal Service, perhaps America’s most beloved federal institution, is in peril. Postal workers are being attacked and mail is being stolen at unprecedented levels. Make no mistake; the Postal Inspection Service is doing very little about it...Americans deserve to have their mail protected and postal employees deserve to feel safe while they’re at work. The Postal Service must effectively utilize all of its resources to curb the plague of mail theft and stop the attacks on postal workers... What I do know is that Mr. DeJoy hasn’t done anything to rectify the problem.”⁷

⁴ United States Postal Service, Office of Inspector General, *Arrow Key Management Controls* (Aug. 31, 2020) (online at www.uspsoig.gov/document/arrow-key-management-controls).

⁵ *The Stolen-Mail Scheme Now Targeting a Wealthy D.C. Suburb*, *Washington Post* (Apr. 30, 2022) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2022/05/01/chevy-chase-mailbox-stolen-checks/).

⁶ *Thousands of Postal Carriers Assaulted or Robbed Since 2020: USPIS Data*, NBC4 (May 20, 2022) (online at www.nbcwashington.com/investigations/thousands-of-postal-carriers-assaulted-or-robbed-since-2020-uspis-data/3057513/).

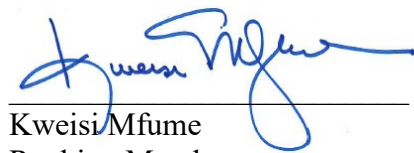
⁷ Committee on Oversight and Reform, *Hearing on Delivering for Pennsylvania: Examining Postal Service Delivery and Operations from the Cradle of Liberty*, 117th Cong. (Sept. 7, 2022) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/legislation/hearings/delivering-for-pennsylvania-examining-postal-service-delivery-and-operations>).

Given the severity of this issue, we believe it is imperative to take swift and decisive action to protect postal carriers from abuse and restore public confidence in the safety and reliability of our mail system. We respectfully request that you provide to this Committee no later than June 12, 2023, a detailed plan outlining your past, current, and future efforts to hold thieves and assailants accountable, and better secure the physical safety and wellbeing of postal workers across the country. We look forward to partnering with the Postal Service to do all we can protect these public servants.

The Committee on Oversight and Accountability is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X.

If you have any questions, please contact Subcommittee staff at (202) 225-5051.

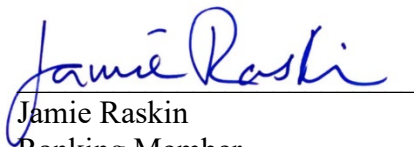
Sincerely,



Kweisi Mfume
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Government Operations
and the Federal Workforce



Gerald E. Connolly
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Cybersecurity,
Information Technology, and
Government Innovation



Jamie Raskin
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Accountability

cc: The Honorable Pete Sessions, Chair
Subcommittee on Government Operations and the Federal Workforce

The Honorable Nancy Mace, Chair
Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, Information Technology, and Government Innovation

The Honorable James Comer, Chair
Committee on Oversight and Accountability