

**Testimony of  
Rictarsha Westmoreland  
Mail Processing Clerk, Trustee, and Shop Steward  
Baltimore Francis “Stu” Filbey Area Local #181**

**Waiting on the Mail: Postal Service Standard Drops in Baltimore and  
the Surrounding Area  
Committee on Oversight and Reform  
Subcommittee on Government Operations  
February 14, 2022**

Good Morning Chairman Connolly, Ranking Member Hice, members of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform, and distinguished members of the Maryland Congressional delegation. My name is Rictarsha Westmoreland. USPS hired me as a Postal Support Employee (PSE) in 2016 to work in the Linthicum Incoming Mail Facility, located just outside of Baltimore. Today, in addition to my postal duties, I serve as a Shop Steward and Trustee for the Baltimore Francis Stu Filbey Area Local # 181 of the American Postal Workers Union. My local and national Union represents more than 200,000 of the 630,000 postal workers who proudly accept, sort, process, transport, and deliver mail to 161 million addresses a day. As a Marylander I appreciate the committee's concern over USPS' performance in Baltimore and its ongoing efforts to protect the Postal Service.

The Linthicum facility is an essential part of the Baltimore region's mail system, with nearly 50% of the facility's mail originating from Baltimore it is not an exaggeration to say that the problems I witness at my facility result in mail delays for the entire country. We must address the Baltimore region's mail delays, and USPS' ever declining service standards before customers lose confidence in their Postal Service.

My coworkers and I are bombarded by media reports and customer complaints about lost and delayed mail. I hear from friends and loved ones about how USPS' delays affect our communities when we fail to deliver life saving medications, wedding invitations, retirement checks and bill payments on time, which results in late fees.

Unfortunately, the frustration we witness from the public is not unique. In preparation for this hearing, I reviewed a November 2021 Office of the Inspector General Audit Report that found the Baltimore region had the *second-highest* number of lost mail inquiries of any major metropolitan area. The same report found that the former Baltimore district failed to meet its performance targets *every week during the 96 week audit* for four flagship products including first class mail.

While this performance is embarrassing, it is preventable. We can restore the level of service postal customers deserve with better managerial decisions. While USPS' continued decline in service standards is at the root of many of the customer complaints I receive, the focus of my testimony will be on how a lack of staffing impacts the reliability of our mail service.

In my facility, my union informed me that since September 11, 2021, there has been a reduction of 99 PSEs and 14 Full time regular (FTR) clerks for a total reduction of 113 Mail Processing Clerks; a statistic that is only made worse by covid absenteeism.

Lead clerks are the individuals charged with training. However, because of the worker shortage, lead clerks are working on machines and they cannot walk around and help new employees. As such, my colleagues who are not designated trainers, are expected to step in and take on the task of training new employees in addition to their daily duties. My coworkers do their best, but like the lead clerks, they are overwhelmed. Often because of the physical distance between workstations, questions go unanswered, and mistakes happen.

I believe that the current delays we are witnessing across the nation result from inadequate investments in staffing and poor management. We do not have enough workers, and when we hire, new employees are not trained how to sort the mail. This leads to mail being given to carriers out of order, which forces letter carriers to skip entire blocks and bring mail back to the station, or worse, mail to be delivered to the wrong address.

The problems we face—disrespectful management, a flawed onboarding process, and chronic understaffing — are reversible. But, even if we were able to start meeting our performance targets, USPS would still be slower than the public deserves until we return to the 2012 service standards.

Baltimore certainly has its problems, but, like every other postal facility across the country, it has a dedicated group of postal workers who genuinely want to see management step up and make the improvements we desperately need. I hope that my testimony may aid us in taking a step in the right direction and move USPS toward not just meeting its current performance targets, but to restoring itself to the 2012 service standards the American Public deserves. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I look forward to your questions.

### **Biography**

Rictarsha Westmoreland serves as a Mail Processing Clerk at the Linthicum Incoming Mail Facility. Hired in 2016 Westmoreland also serves as the Baltimore Francis Area Local #181 Trustee, and shop steward. Rictarsha was the first PSE in the local union's history to become a shop steward.

Westmoreland also attends Catonsville Community college where she is studying to be an Anesthesiologist. Westmoreland lives in Gwynn Oak Maryland.