

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY
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January 31, 2024

The Honorable Shalanda Young
Director
United States Office of Management and Budget
725 17th St, NW
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Director Young,

The Committee on Oversight and Accountability is conducting oversight of agency telework policies and their impact on agency missions. As part of this oversight, we seek an update on the implementation of Office and Personnel Management memorandum M-23-15, *Measuring, Monitoring, and Improving Organizational Health and Organizational Performance in the Context of Evolving Agency Work Environments*, to include progress in increasing in-person work.

M-23-15 was issued in April 2023 and appears to envision an improved, data-driven approach to measuring agency performance and customer service, to include the impact of telework.¹ In May 2023, Committee Republicans sent requests to 25 agencies seeking telework related data to assess the claims of the Biden Administration that telework in Federal agencies had been an unmitigated success and therefore justified a permanent shift to widespread telework.² It stood to reason that in the wake of OMB publishing M-23-15, agencies would be compiling the data we requested. Yet, even after a protracted delay in providing any response at all, agencies generally produced very little quantitative data underpinning their telework and remote work policies. While the Committee continues our efforts to obtain substantive responses, we assume these agencies have been more responsive to your agency. In fact, in a July 2023 briefing, OMB staff reported that “nearly all CFO Act agencies have submitted plans for

¹ U.S. Office of Management and Budget, Executive Office of the President, Memorandum M-23-15, *Measuring, Monitoring, and Improving Organizational Health and Organizational Performance in the Context of Evolving Agency Work Requirements* (April 13, 2023)

² Letter from Chairman James Comer et al. to Various Agency Heads (May 18, 2023); see Letter from Chairman James Comer, Chairman Pete Sessions, and Representative Lauren Boebert to Various Agency Heads (Aug. 4, 2023)

review.”³ Thus, we assume agencies have provided OMB with significant data relevant to our inquiry.

In addition, M-23-15 states there is an “expectation...agencies will continue to substantially increase meaningful in-person work at Federal offices, particularly at headquarters and equivalents...”⁴ In the July briefing, OMB stated it anticipated “establishing a minimum of 4-6 days in-person per pay period or existing expectations already in excess of 6 days per pay period due to ongoing mission needs” at agency headquarters.⁵ It is important to understand the status of in-person work plans, so we seek updates regarding these as well. This is especially true in light of recent reports that White House chief of staff Jeffrey Zients has yet again had to personally insert himself into the effort to increase in-person work at Federal agencies.⁶ This report says he is “demanding proof” of return-to-office plans and progress.⁷ So are we. Over and above the effort to increase in-person work, this highlights concerns the federal workforce may believe it can do as it sees fit, regardless of which administration is in charge.

Ultimately, the telework debate is about agency performance. The better agencies are able to measure performance, the better they can improve customer satisfaction and use taxpayer dollars more efficiently. Both Congress and the Administration will also be able to better conduct oversight and make policy and budgeting decisions. As your own guidance states, current performance frameworks do not reach to a sufficiently granular level,⁸ a possible contributing factor to the public being “often dissatisfied with government services when compared to the private sector.”⁹ The public’s perception of federal agency performance is likely further damaged by reports that federal workers are resisting even the President’s own direction to increase in-person work,¹⁰ as well as union grievances that hinder agency management’s efforts to increase in-person work to better accomplish their missions.¹¹ To assist the Committee in its oversight, please provide the following information, documents and communications no later than February 14, 2024:

1. Copies of Workplace Environment Plans for all Chief Financial Officer Act agencies;

³ Office of Management and Budget, Executive Office of the President, Briefing to House Oversight and Accountability staff regarding implementation status of M-15-23 (July 11, 2023). On file with Committee staff

⁴ *Supra* note 1, at 1

⁵ *Supra* note 3

⁶ Hans Nicols, Scoop: *W.H. demands proof from Cabinet officials on return-to-office*, Axios (January 19, 2024)

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Supra* note 1 at 5

⁹ *Supra* note 1 at 7

¹⁰ President Joseph R. Biden, 2022 State of the Union Address (March 1, 2022); see also David Shepardson, *White House pushes US agencies to ‘aggressively’ boost in-person work*, Reuters (August 5, 2023)

¹¹ Erich Wagner, *Impasses panel preserves telework levels for FEC bargaining unit workers*, Government Executive (Oct. 19, 2023)

2. A status report on all agency plans to increase in-person work, to include an implementation timeline and an explanation of any obstacles that have impeded such efforts;
3. In cases in which either collective bargaining agreements or grievances filed by collective bargaining units have impeded efforts to increase in-person work, a description of the circumstances and outcomes;
4. A description of employee resistance to increased in-person work;
5. A description of any findings regarding the impact, positive or negative, of increased telework or remote work on agency performance, to include observations down to the most granular work element possible. Also include the data underlying these findings;
6. An explanation of new or evolving best practices regarding organizational performance and organizational health measurement in federal agencies, to include the impact of telework and remote work;
7. An explanation of how federal “leaders, managers, and supervisors are being held to the highest standards of accountability for understanding how their operational units are performing and ...(maximizing) organizational performance and organizational health;”¹²
8. An explanation of challenges federal leaders, managers, and supervisors face in “maximizing organizational performance and organizational health;” and
9. An analysis of agency continuity of operations capabilities vis-à-vis alternative work capabilities.

An attachment to this letter provides additional instructions for responding to the Committee’s request. To make arrangements to deliver the requested information, or to ask any related follow-up questions, please contact Committee on Oversight and Accountability Majority Staff at (202) 225-5074.

The Committee on Oversight and Accountability is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this inquiry.

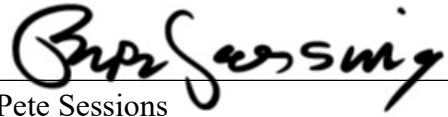
¹² *Supra* note 1 at 2

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Sincerely,



James Comer
Chairman
House Committee on Oversight and
Operations Accountability



Pete Sessions
Chairman
Subcommittee on Government
and the Federal Workforce

Cc: The Honorable Jamie Raskin, Ranking Member
House Committee on Oversight and Accountability

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