

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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October 29, 2024

The Honorable Gene Dodaro  
Comptroller General  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

The Subcommittee on Government Operations and the Federal Workforce recently held its third hearing related to improper payments and fraud in the federal government.<sup>1</sup> The goal of that hearing was to discuss agencies' progress preventing improper payments and fraud in the federal government's lifesaving programs. The Subcommittee seeks to continuously evaluate whether agencies are getting better or worse at ensuring the levels of fraud seen during the pandemic will "never happen again." Unfortunately, because of limited or unreliable information maintained by federal agencies, the Subcommittee has been unable to adequately assess agencies' progress.

During the recent hearing, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) documented an unacceptable scale and scope of improper payments and fraud across government—\$2.7 trillion in improper payments since 2003, with \$236 billion in fiscal year 2023 alone.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, witness testimonies at our hearings made clear that continuing to do the same things to address improper payments is not working and will not address growing problems.

Improper payments include underpayments and overpayments—intentional or otherwise—and can fall into the categories of fraud, waste, and abuse.<sup>3</sup> According to the GAO, "reducing improper payments...is critical to safeguarding federal funds."<sup>4</sup> Financial fraud, one category of improper payments that involves wrongful deception intended to result in financial gain, "poses a significant risk to the integrity of federal programs and erodes public trust in

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<sup>1</sup>Where Do We Go From Here? Examining a Path Forward to Assess Agencies' Efforts to Prevent Improper Payments and Fraud: *Hearing Before Subcomm. on Government Operations and the Federal Workforce, H. Comm. On Oversight & Accountability*, 118<sup>th</sup> Cong. (2024) available at <https://oversight.house.gov/hearing/where-do-we-go-from-here-examining-a-path-forward-to-assess-agencies-efforts-to-prevent-improper-payments-and-fraud-2/>

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Gov't Accountability Off., GAO-15-593SP, *A Framework for Managing Fraud Risks in Federal Programs* (2015) available at <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-15-593sp.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Gov't Accountability Off., GAO-24-107660, *Payment Integrity: Significant Improvements Are Needed to Address Improper Payments and Fraud* (2024) available at <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-24-107660.pdf>.

government.”<sup>5</sup> We need to find and implement new solutions to prevent improper payments and fraud across government programs.

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has identified a list of high priority programs, which are those with the highest dollar value or rate of improper payments or those with the highest risk of improper payments. Federal law requires these programs report information such as the root causes of their improper payments, mitigation strategies, and corrective action measures. However, the amount of improper payments within these programs continues to grow.

To help the Subcommittee identify solutions to address this very important issue, we ask that GAO examine these high priority programs, as identified by OMB, to determine the extent to which agencies have:

- Adequately identified and assessed the true root causes of documented improper payments, including those related to fraudulent activity;
- Identified and implemented corrective actions that would address these root causes;
- Secured the data needed to help address the root causes; and
- Identified barriers, if any, that are preventing them from fully addressing the root causes, to include the inability to access necessary data.

We ask that GAO regularly update Subcommittee staff on the progress of this review and provide periodic briefings on known practices that have helped prevent improper payments and fraud.

For any follow-up questions or questions related to the timing, sequencing, and scoping of this work, please contact the Committee on Oversight and Accountability Majority staff at (202) 225-5074 and the Minority Staff at (202) 225-5051.

The Committee on Oversight and Accountability is the principal oversight committee in the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. Additionally, the Committee maintains explicit legislative jurisdiction over “Government management and accounting measures generally” and the “Overall economy, efficiency, and management of government operations and activities” under House Rule X, Clause 1(n).

Thank you for your attention to this very important matter.

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<sup>5</sup> U.S. Gov’t Accountability Off., GAO-15-593SP, *A Framework for Managing Fraud Risks in Federal Programs* (2015) available at <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-15-593sp.pdf>.

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Sincerely,



Pete Sessions  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Government Operations  
and the Federal Workforce



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