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PAUL D. TONKO
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
20TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND
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AND TECHNOLOGY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT

SUBCOMMITTEE ON RESEARCH AND
TECHNOLOGY

Dear Postmaster General DeJoy,

I write to express my concerns regarding mail processing and delivery within my congressional district in Upstate New York. I am deeply troubled by reports of delayed mail delivery and capacity limitations imposed upon local facilities as a result of agency-wide directives. I am dismayed by the agency's lack of urgency to address these systemic issues which continue to harm both the customers and the workforce of the U.S. Postal Service. I am requesting clarification on recent decisions that have been made by you and the leadership at your agency.

Constituents, local officials, and community leaders have shared personal accounts of the significant changes in their mail service under your leadership. Lifesaving medications, Social Security checks, veterans and unemployment benefits, legal documents, and many other indispensable necessities are processed by Postal employees and handled with care each day by our letter carriers. As the COVID-19 pandemic reached every corner of our country over the last year, reliance upon these services has proven even more essential. Residents have shared stories of mailed packages taking more than 25 days to arrive at its destination, holiday cards being received in February despite being sent out months prior and mail being delivered as late as 10:00PM, or not at all. Despite our Postal workers' tremendous efforts and dedication, the faith and confidence Americans once had in the U.S. Postal Service has deteriorated to a new low because of your directives.

In my district, employees at processing plants like the Albany Karner Road facility ("Albany facility"; "Albany plant") in Colonie, New York are working tirelessly to uphold their commitment to quality customer service. To date, six mail processing plants in New York have closed. Because of this, the Albany facility has been forced to absorb the load from of multiple plants and is now handling more packages than ever before. The Albany plant is a nexus of distribution for many in Upstate New York, serving the state's capital in addition to communities from mid-Hudson to Tupper Lake—communities that are nearly two-hundred miles apart. Despite the increased workload, the Albany facility has not obtained the modern equipment necessary to address the uptick in volume. In fact, the Albany processing plant has not seen mail-sorting equipment enhancements in more than ten years, and inexplicably experienced the decommissioning of mail-sorting machinery prior to the November 2020 elections, where mail-in voting was predicted to be at a record high, and the holiday season, traditionally known as the busiest time of year for the Postal Service.

These agency decisions have resulted in an overly-burdened workforce and deficient service for Capital Region residents. My constituents and all Americans deserve reliable postal service and postal employees deserve the equipment and resources required to make that a reality.

With this in mind, I respectfully request a response to the following questions by Friday, April 2nd:

1. Did you anticipate and strategize ways to address potential delays in processing and delivery due to increased reliance upon postal service due to the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What was the basis for decommissioning mail-sorting machinery from the Albany, New York facility last year?
3. With less equipment and increased mail volume, every step of postal service at the Albany New Karner Road facility has been significantly impacted. Did you consult with the workforce prior to making equipment removal decisions?
4. When you approved of the decommissioning of the mail-sorting machinery ahead of peak mailing season, what efforts were made to lessen any anticipated negative impacts on customer service and facility operations?
5. Since the removal of the mail-sorting equipment, have you evaluated the effect this decision has had on delays to mail processing and delivery in the region?
6. I understand that in some cases, additional staff have been brought in to assist with increased workload, but capacity remains constrained due to lack of equipment. What effect have these conditions had on employee morale?
7. How many complaints has your agency received from customers specifically within Albany, Montgomery, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Schenectady counties, regarding service since plant consolidations took place?
8. What steps is your agency taking to address late-night mail deliveries for both customers and employees?
9. What steps do you plan to take to rectify operational and delivery service issues and to uphold and strengthen the mission of the Postal Service?

In order to ensure reliable service, the equipment at the Albany facility must be restored as soon as possible, and the necessary upgrades must be made in a timely matter to address the concerns outlined in this letter. Thank you for your attention and consideration. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Paul D. Tonko

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul D. Tonko". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name.