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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6300

DAVID P. CLEARY, STAFF DIRECTOR
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<http://help.senate.gov>

November 23, 2020

The Honorable Emily W. Murphy
Administrator
General Services Administration
1800 F Street NW
Washington, DC 20405

Dear Administrator Murphy:

I am increasingly troubled by your continued delay in providing President-elect Biden, Vice President-elect Harris, and their staffs with the critical resources necessary to begin the transition for their incoming administration. Your agency's mission is to ensure the federal government has the products, services, and facilities it needs to serve the public. Yet, you are choosing to put political loyalty ahead of public health and safety by refusing to make a determination of ascertainment to begin a formal transition of power to the President-elect.

By delaying the start of the formal transition, you are impeding the ability of the incoming administration to receive access to resources and personnel. Such a delay could hamper the federal response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has already claimed over 250,000 lives. It is completely unacceptable to delay the critical work to save lives, improve educational opportunities for students, or ensure workers are safe and healthy and families are able to make a living during this crisis.

President-elect Biden has laid out a clear, comprehensive vision for how he plans to assert federal leadership to tackle COVID-19, from ensuring access to testing, therapeutics, and vaccines, particularly in communities hardest hit by the virus, to strengthening contact tracing and developing and distributing clear, evidence-based standards for businesses, schools, and communities to follow in order to keep people safe. Allowing the transition team to begin work with public health officials and to assess resource and personnel needs for the next administration is critical to achieving improved outcomes for patients and families across the country. In fact, Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, and Dr. Moncef Slaoui, the Chief Scientific Adviser for Operation Warp Speed, have both expressed that the ability to coordinate with the Biden transition team would facilitate a smooth response to the pandemic.

Continuing to delay ascertainment also undermines President-elect Biden's ability to begin his administration with the strongest possible federal workforce. Without being able to access current executive branch employees and resources, the transition team is limited in its ability to understand gaps and resource needs, as well as to assess the consequences of the unprecedented

exodus of federal officials under President Trump. Additionally, the delay has meant the FBI has not yet begun background investigations on President-elect Biden's nominees.

The people of the nation have elected their next president, and it is past time for the nation's leaders to allow a seamless transition of power. I call on you to immediately make a determination of ascertainment, so President-elect Biden, Vice President-elect Harris, and their transition team can begin their critical work without further delay.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Patty Murray". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

PATY MURRAY

Ranking Member

U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions