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United States Senate

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The Honorable Robin Carnahan
Administrator
U.S. General Services Administration
1800 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20405

Dear Administrator Carnahan,

The same day President Biden's White House Chief of Staff called on agencies to return federal employees to their offices, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) advised hundreds of employees working at the Speaker Nancy Pelosi Federal Building in San Francisco to [stop coming to the office "for the foreseeable future" due to safety concerns with crime and violence outside.](#)

The [General Services Administration](#) (GSA), which manages the property, spent [\\$3 million redesigning](#) the building's public plaza "[in order to maximize its use by the community and employees.](#)" When the new plaza opened less than two years ago, GSA stated it would "[create a new safe space for public gatherings and education.](#)"

The exact opposite is occurring. The plaza is a dangerous, open-air drug market, with addicts shooting up, snorting, and smoking drugs in plain view. Drug users [pass out on the public benches](#) and [used needles litter the ground.](#) Overdosing is "[a commonplace horror,](#)" with nearly 150 suspected overdoses— including [more than 30 deaths](#)—on the block surrounding the Federal Building reported in the first half of this year. Dozens of dealers show up daily, [one of which opened fire with a gun](#) near the building recently. While [fencing has been put up,](#) addicts and dealers still hang out around the plaza.

According to its [designer,](#) the building was set up to represent "the way government should be and how the workplace should be." Ironically, the Nancy Pelosi Federal Building is instead a symbol of the way government doesn't work, with offices and workplaces largely empty due to drug and crime problems resulting from the misguided policies of the state and city governments.

"The building has long been a locus of some of the city's most intractable problems," reports [The San Francisco Chronicle.](#) Security around the building has long been a concern of employees and neighbors. "[Almost since day one,](#) they've complained that the plaza conceived as a community hub was uninviting at best, squalid and dangerous at worse."

Federal employees [report having knives pulled on them](#) and one was chased with a [hammer.](#) Working at a Department of Health and Human Services building shouldn't be a risk to someone's health, or life!

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The building's namesake, former-Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who has an office in the building, "[raised concerns about the building's tenant safety](#)" with the U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of California.

Additionally, the Departments of Labor, Agriculture, and Transportation, and the Social Security Administration [have offices in the building](#). The complex also houses a [day care center](#), which is [having trouble hiring due to the location](#).

While HHS workers abandoned the building, others who show up are being [escorted into the building](#) for their protection. The [number of Federal Protective Service \(FPS\) officers](#) patrolling the area has also increased.

It's extremely concerning that the city's inability to control crime is endangering civil servants, children, and visitors.

With at least [five other federal facilities within the San Francisco area](#) and GSA reportedly utilizing [only about ten percent of its available office space](#), perhaps the Speaker Pelosi Federal Building should be shuttered for the foreseeable future with its workers relocated where taxpayers can interact with government agencies face-to-face without fearing for their lives.

The [HHS memo](#) directing agency employees to avoid the building reportedly states "this recommendation should be extended to all [Region IX](#) employees, including those not currently utilizing telework flexibilities." This region includes all of California, Arizona, Hawaii, Nevada, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau and more than 157 federally-recognized tribes including the Navajo Nation.

Could you please provide the following information:

- The number of federal employees whose primary workstation is the Speaker Nancy Pelosi Federal Building;
- The number of employees who report to the building for work on a weekly or more frequent basis;
- A detailed description of the number and manner of any threats or crimes reported against employees, visitors, or the facility itself documented on the premises of the building over the past two years;
- The current utilization rate of the space within all of the federal buildings in the San Jose-San Francisco-Oakland, California locality pay area;
- A description of all additional measures, including the escorts, fencing, and increased presence of FPS officers, being taken to secure the building and protect workers and visitors, along with the estimated cost for each measure on a monthly basis;
- A summary of the risk assessment conducted, if any, for the inclusion of a public plaza as part of the San Francisco Federal Building and any safety considerations, such as the crime rate of an area, GSA considered when determining the location and layout of a facility;
- A list of all federal buildings or properties, if any, where employees have been directed to work remotely due to crime or other risks to health or safety over the past two years; and

- An explanation as to whether or not the recommendation to work remotely “for the foreseeable future” is extended to all employees in Region IX due to the unsafe conditions of a single building, and, if so,—
 - The rationale for such a determination; and
 - All documentation forming the basis for the issuance of the HHS memo.

Thank you for your attention to this important subject. I would appreciate a response by December 20, 2023. Please do not hesitate to contact my office if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator