



Testimony of Emily DiVito

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Before the DOGE Subcommittee of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
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Chairwoman Greene, Ranking Member Stansbury, and Members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important topic. My name is Emily DiVito. I am the Senior Advisor for Economic Policy at Groundwork Collaborative, an economic policy think tank in Washington, DC. I previously served as a policy advisor at the Treasury Department.

Americans deserve a government that works for them – a government that makes their lives easier and more secure. By that standard, the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) has failed.

DOGE directed widespread cuts to the federal agencies that administer vital basic needs programs for families and oversaw mass firings of government employees. Far from making government more efficient, DOGE has led to increased costs and administrative burdens and weakened consumer protections for American families.

On May 30, Elon Musk ended his 130-day tenure as a Special Government Employee running DOGE. Americans were not impressed by the results. Recent polling found that independent voters swung 29 points against DOGE in just three months. By the end of Musk's tenure, independents said by a 22-point margin that they "do not believe DOGE will make the government work better for people like me."¹

Congress now faces a choice: to close out this unfortunate chapter or to double down on DOGE. As the Subcommittee considers this choice, I would like to highlight several ways DOGE's cuts have harmed American families and would continue to harm them if made permanent.

First, DOGE's cuts make it materially harder and more expensive for families to access the basic needs programs for which they're eligible.

As just one example, DOGE's interventions at the Social Security Administration (SSA) have disrupted access to critical benefits for nearly 74 million Americans. The departure of nearly 13 percent of SSA's experienced staff increases the risk of prolonged or more frequent system

¹ Data for Progress. 2025. "DOGE Tracking Dataset." June 6
https://www.filesforprogress.org/datasets/2025/5/dfp_gwc_doge_tracking_tabs.pdf.

outages, potentially delaying payments or limiting access to support.² New policies – such as restrictions on updating bank account information by phone – will force seniors to collectively spend over a million hours annually on unnecessary travel just to receive the benefits they have earned.³ At understaffed local field offices, some of which have lost over 25 percent of their workforce, beneficiaries will face longer wait times and poor service.⁴

DOGE cuts have also resulted in interrupted service at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), including to the Veterans Health Administration – the largest U.S. health care system, serving over 9.1 million veterans annually through a network of 170 hospitals and more than 1,300 outpatient clinics.⁵ Earlier this year, DOGE announced the goal of firing over 80,000 VA staffers, representing one in six employees. It has already fired at least 2,400 staffers⁶ while more than 14,000 VA healthcare staffers applied to Deferred Resignation Program (DRP), including over 200 doctors, 1,700 nurses and almost 900 advanced medical support assistants.⁷ Although many of these actions remain under litigation, their impact has been devastating. So many nurses quit in a rural Illinois hospital that it was forced to close its acute care unit. A backlog of 2,298 unread radiology exams developed in Orlando as radiologists quit. And over 1,000 veterans were informed they could no longer receive treatment for severe diseases, including metastatic head and neck cancers, to name a few examples.⁸

The mental health of those who selflessly served our country should be a priority for any administration. Over 1.7 million veterans are in need of mental health treatment,⁹ and tragically 18 veterans die by suicide each day.¹⁰ Instead of working to address this crisis, the Trump administration has canceled a research contract with Harvard University on veterans' suicide

² Romig, Kathleen, and Devin O'Connor. 2025. "Reassignment Won't Fix the Largest-Ever Social Security Staffing Cut." *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*, June 23.

<https://www.cbpp.org/research/social-security/reassignment-wont-fix-the-largest-ever-social-security-staffing-cut>; Rein, Lisa and Hannah Natanson. 2025. Long waits, waves of calls, website crashes: Social Security is breaking down. *The Washington Post*, 25. March. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/03/25/social-security-phones-doge-cuts/>.

³ Zippel, Claire and Devin O'Connor. 2025. Social security service restrictions burden seniors with long, unnecessary travel. *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*. 13. June.

<https://www.cbpp.org/research/social-security/social-security-service-restrictions-burden-seniors-with-long-unnecessary>.

⁴ Berzon, Alexandra, Nicholas Nehamas and Tara Siegel Bernard. 2025. The bureaucrat and the billionaire: inside DOGE's chaotic takeover of social security. *The New York Times*, 16. June.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/16/us/politics/doge-social-security.html>; Kelly, Allie and Juliana Kaplan. 2025. See the list of 41 Social Security offices where DOGE is cutting up to half of workers. *Business Insider*. 9. April.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/social-security-offices-doge-cutting-most-customer-service-workers-2025-4>;

⁵ Veterans Health Administration. VA.gov | Veterans Affairs. <https://www.va.gov/health/>.

⁶ Cameron, Chris and Nicholas Nehamas. 2025. Veterans Affairs Department plans to eliminate more than 80,000 workers. *The New York Times* (5. March). <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/05/us/politics/veterans-affairs-cuts-trump.html>.

⁷ Heckman, Jory, and Jory Heckman. 2025. "'DRP or No DRP, I'm Done:' VA Health Care Employees Plan on Leaving, with or without Separation Incentives." *Federal News Network - Helping Feds Meet Their Mission*, May 29.

<https://federalnewsnetwork.com/veterans-affairs/2025/05/few-va-health-care-employees-qualify-for-resignation-incentives-some-are-leaving-anyway/>.

⁸ Glantz, Aaron. 2025. Disarray at Department of Veterans Affairs imperils patient care, internal documents reveal. *The Guardian*, May 23. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/may/23/veterans-affairs-doge-musk>.

⁹ Sage, Debra. 2024. "VA Releases 2024 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report - VA News." *VA News*, December 19. <https://news.va.gov/137221/va-2024-suicide-prevention-annual-report/>.

¹⁰ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2018. "Department of Veterans Affairs Mental Health Services: Need, Usage, and Access and Barriers to Care." *National Academies Press*, January 31. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK499497/>.

prevention¹¹ and rescinded work from home arrangements, forcing social workers and psychiatric nurses to see veterans in crowded hallways, which jeopardizes much-needed confidentiality and privacy in these appointments. Many workers have quit or retired early due to these conditions, further worsening the VA mental health workers shortage.¹² DOGE also initially fired several Veteran Crisis Line employees, but reinstated them after facing backlash. Nonetheless, crisis line operators reported increased call volumes and the need for additional staffers as DOGE cuts have left other VA call centers, such as the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans understaffed, forcing veterans to use the crisis line as a last resort.¹³

At the center of many of these decisions is a faulty artificial intelligence tool designed by former DOGE staffer Sahil Lavingia, which was utilized to review more than 76,000 VA contracts and identify waste, tagging contracts as “munchable.” The tool utilized an outdated model that frequently misinterpreted contracts, exaggerated dollar amounts, and flagged over 2,000 contracts for termination, including those for essential services like cancer research or nurse care, resulting in 655 contracts terminated by the VA.¹⁴

Additionally, while DOGE has not delivered the savings it promised, its sweeping cuts are degrading consumer protection safeguards and empowering bad actors. DOGE has targeted the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) with the intent to dramatically reduce its mission and capabilities. Since its creation in 2011, the CFPB has put over \$21 billion back into the pockets of more than 200 million consumers.¹⁵ By attempting to cut its workforce by as much as 90 percent and zero-out its budget, DOGE is trying to eliminate a key consumer protection agency, which will enable exploitative companies and financial firms to profit at the expense of consumers.¹⁶

All together, DOGE has inflicted serious harm on seniors, the disabled, veterans, and consumers.

¹¹ Nehamas, Nicholas. 2025. “Trump’s Push to Defund Harvard Prompts Clash over Veteran Suicide Research.” *The New York Times*, May 17. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/16/us/politics/trump-harvard-veterans-research.html>.

¹² Barry, Ellen, and Nicholas Nehamas. 2025. “Trump’s V.A. Squeezes Mental Health Care in Crowded Offices, Raising Privacy Concerns.” *The New York Times*, May 5. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/04/us/politics/veterans-affairs-mental-health-privacy.html>.

¹³ Craig, Tim. 2025. “Veterans Crisis Line Operators Say They Feel Battered by Trump, DOGE.” *The Washington Post*, March 27. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2025/03/27/veterans-crisis-line-va-employees-doge-stress/>.

¹⁴ Roberts, Brandon, and Vernal Coleman. 2025. “Senators Demand Transparency on Canceled VA Contracts.” *ProPublica*, June 11. <https://www.propublica.org/article/doge-ai-veterans-affairs-canceled-contracts-senators-trump>.

¹⁵ “The CFPB | Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.” 2024. *Consumer Financial Protection Bureau*, December 12. <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/about-us/the-bureau/>; Schoeff, Mark, Jr. 2025. “Senate Banking Would Zero out CFPB Funding in Reconciliation.” *Roll Call*, June 9. <https://rollcall.com/2025/06/09/senate-banking-would-zero-out-cfpb-funding-in-reconciliation/>;

Goodman, Jasper. 2025. “Parliamentarian Nixes Key Pieces of Tim Scott’s Megabill Proposal - Live Updates - POLITICO.” *POLITICO*, June 20. <https://www.politico.com/live-updates/2025/06/20/congress/parliamentarian-banking-republican-megabill-cfpb-00414830>.

¹⁶ Megerian, Chris. 2025. “Nearly 90% of Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Cut as Trump’s Government Downsizing Continues.” *Federal News Network*, April 18. <https://federalnewsnetwork.com/workforce/2025/04/layoffs-hit-consumer-financial-protection-bureau-as-trumps-government-downsizing-continues/>.

Even after DOGE reversed course on some of its most extreme directives – including one that would have prohibited Americans from filing for Social Security benefits over the phone¹⁷ – the chaos, confusion, and temporary service interruption continues to harm beneficiaries and overburden remaining agency staff.

DOGE’s cuts have also made our economy weaker and less resilient. For instance, DOGE funding cuts to weather research and natural disaster preparation and recovery programs all but ensure that the U.S. will be less able to recover from future natural disasters.¹⁸

As explained in the Bethesda Declaration, an open letter from more than 480 public servants in the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to Director Bhattacharya, the policy changes and funding cuts to science infrastructure enacted by DOGE pose a serious threat to America’s long-term prosperity.¹⁹ The proposed 43 percent reduction in NIH funding derails critical research into life-threatening conditions like cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease happening at universities, hospitals, and research institutions across the country. Importantly, the impact of these grant cuts will be uneven.

The funding cuts, paired with layoffs of nearly 25 percent of Department of Health and Human Services staff, are expected to significantly curtail biomedical innovation, potentially causing a 15.3 percent decline in drug-related patents.²⁰ Diminished drug innovation could result in the loss of an estimated 82 million life-years across the U.S. population, compared to outcomes under prior funding levels.²¹ Not only could Americans live shorter lives as a result of these cuts, they will also likely lead sicker lives. Among the nearly one quarter reduction in Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) staffing since Trump took office, every scientist and public health expert working in the CDC’s Office on Smoking and Health was laid off by DOGE, leaving Americans more vulnerable to tobacco, which is the leading preventable cause of death in the United States.²² Also at the CDC, hollowing out of the National Center for Environmental Health

¹⁷ Bernard, Tara Siegel. 2025. “Social Security Rolls Back Restrictions on Filing for Benefits by Phone.” *The New York Times*, April 10. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/10/business/social-security-phone-benefits.html>.

¹⁸ Borenstein, Seth, and Gabriella Aoun Angueira. 2025. “Hurricane Season Begins with Worries over DOGE Cuts at FEMA and NOAA.” *AP News*, May 31.

<https://apnews.com/article/hurricane-season-disaster-weather-doge-fema-noaa-cd215947480de9099a53fe20669bb923>; Malkoff, Dave. 2025. “DOGE Cuts to Weather Balloon Sites Leave U.S. Without Crucial Data, Some Meteorologists Say.” *CBS News*, May 23.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/doge-cuts-nws-balloon-sites-leave-us-without-crucial-weather-data-some-meteorologists-say/>; Brook, Jack. 2025. “Loss of FEMA Program Spells Disaster for Communities and Their Projects.” *AP News*, April 28.

<https://apnews.com/article/fema-bric-grants-climate-resilience-cb2ead8d418e1ff4e53d95f482de3522>.

¹⁹ Stand up for Science. 2025. “The Bethesda Declaration: A Call for NIH and HHS Leadership to Deliver on Promises of Academic Freedom and Scientific Excellence.” June 9. <https://www.standupforscience.net/bethesda-declaration>.

²⁰ Shao, Elena, and Ashley Wu. 2025. “The Federal Work Force Cuts so Far, Agency by Agency.” *The New York Times*, May 12. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/28/us/politics/trump-doge-federal-job-cuts.html>.

²¹ Cutler, David M, and Edward Glaeser. 2025. “Cutting the NIH—the \$8 Trillion Health Care Catastrophe.” *JAMA Health Forum*, May 29. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamahealthforum.2025.2791>.

²² Katz, Eric. 2025. “CDC Has Shed One-quarter of Staff Even as It Recalls Some Laid off Workers.” *Government Executive*, June 17. [https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2025/06/cdc-has-shed-one-quarter-staff-even-it-recalls-some-laid-workers/406147/#:~:text=The%20Centers%20for%20Disease%20Control%20and%20Prevention%20has%20shed%20nearly,or%20on%20their%20own%20accord](https://www.govexec.com/workforce/2025/06/cdc-has-shed-one-quarter-staff-even-it-recalls-some-laid-workers/406147/#:~:text=The%20Centers%20for%20Disease%20Control%20and%20Prevention%20has%20shed%20nearly,or%20on%20their%20own%20accord;); Frieden, Tom. 2025. “Former CDC Director Tom Frieden: Cuts to the Agency Will Cost American Lives and

severely limits our national capacity for biomonitoring, leaving Americans exposed to dangerous but invisible substances like lead or so-called forever chemicals in their water, food, and other products.

As Americans face worsening health risks, the federal science enterprise is being stripped of the tools and talent needed to develop and deliver the next generation of lifesaving treatments. For instance, the National Science Foundation (NSF) has eliminated nearly 1,600 existing grants and slowed the pace of new awards to the lowest level in 35 years, driving the approval rate for cutting-edge academic proposals to a historic low of just 7 percent.²³ This \$1 billion reduction in research funding severely undermined the U.S.'s strategic advantage in attracting and retaining scientific talent and fuels a growing "brain drain," with more American researchers looking abroad to conduct their work abroad.²⁴

Similarly, recent estimates suggest that such a severe loss of this and other scientific research funding will reduce GDP and overall federal revenues well into the future by inhibiting technological innovation: Permanently cutting non-defense research and development funding by 50 percent could decrease U.S. GDP in the long run by 7.6 percent and federal revenues by 8.6 percent.²⁵ Permanently cutting just the research budget of just the NIH by 50 percent would result in a 3.7 percent decline in GDP and 4.2 percent decline in federal revenue in the long run. Similarly, cutting the NSF by 50 percent would result in 0.7 percent less GDP and 0.8 percent less revenue.²⁶ Proposed cuts to the NIH would also eliminate approximately 68,000 jobs nationwide.²⁷

While working families pay more, the wealthy will get away with paying less. DOGE has gutted the IRS enforcement teams that ensure billionaires and corporations pay their fair share. As of early March, the IRS lost 11 percent of its total workforce and 31 percent of the revenue agents who conduct audits – due to DRP and probationary employee terminations.²⁸ Researchers have

Dollars." *STAT*, April 1.

<https://www.statnews.com/2025/04/01/cdc-cuts-hhs-rif-office-smoking-health-environmental-health-laboratory-communications/>.

²³ Bhatia, Aatish, Irineo Cabrerios, Asmaa Elkeurti, and Ethan Singer. 2025. "Trump Has Cut Science Funding to Its Lowest Level in Decades." *The New York Times*, May 22. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/05/22/upshot/nsf-grants-trump-cuts.html>.; Mervis, Jeffrey. 2025. "Final NSF Budget Proposal Jettisons One Giant Telescope amid Savage Agencywide Cuts." *American Association for the Advancement of Science*, May 30. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.zh6ex5t>.; Dorgelo, Cristin, and Jacob Leibenluft. 2025. "DOGE Interference in Federal Grantmaking Adds Burden, Uncertainty, and Risk." *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*, May 28.

<https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-budget/doge-interference-in-federal-grantmaking-adds-burden-uncertainty-and-risk>.

²⁴ Guglielmi, Giorgia, Miryam Naddaf, and Rachel Fieldhouse. 2025. "US Brain Drain: The Scientists Seeking Jobs Abroad Amid Trump's Assault on Research." *Nature*, May 13. <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-025-01489-y>.

²⁵ Ignacio, Gonzalez Garcia, Juan Montecino, and Vasudeva Ramaswamy. 2025. "Preliminary Estimates of the Macroeconomic Costs of Cutting Federal Funding for Scientific Research." *Figshare*, April 30. <https://doi.org/10.57912/28746446>.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Cutler, David M., and Edward Glaeser. 2025. "Cutting the NIH—The \$8 Trillion Health Care Catastrophe." *JAMA Health Forum*, May 29. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamahealthforum.2025.2791>.

²⁸ LaManna, Nancy A. 2025. "Snapshot Report: IRS Workforce Reductions as of March 2025." *Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration*, May 2. <https://www.tigta.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2025-05/2025ier017fr.pdf>.

found that cutting IRS staff will reduce federal revenues between \$64 billion and \$350 billion over ten years.²⁹

Finally, I want to address the impact that DOGE has had internationally. In just five months of disrupted funding to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and international health programs, DOGE cuts have caused widespread deaths, especially among children. A health economist at Boston University's School of Public Health estimates that DOGE cuts to USAID have already caused more than 360,000 deaths. This includes more than 200,000 children who have lost their lives from the abrupt termination of programs treating severe malnutrition, diarrhea, and pneumonia.³⁰ Meanwhile, disrupted funding for the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief – established by President George W. Bush and one of the most impactful global health initiatives in history – has singlehandedly caused about 65,000 adult deaths and 7,000 infant deaths.³¹ DOGE's decisions have not only harmed individuals directly but also weakened our country's reputation on the global stage, building on its domestic failures to deliver for American families.

DOGE did not generate the \$2 trillion in efficiencies that Elon Musk initially called for. Even the \$180 billion figure it currently claims relies on bad accounting and error-riddled figures.³² Now that Elon Musk has made his exit, it is clear that DOGE failed to deliver a more efficient government. Instead, it delivered a less reliable government.

Congress is at a crossroads. It can choose to learn from the DOGE's mistakes, redirect, and get back to the important work of ensuring government works for people and not special interests. Or, Congress can double down on DOGE, cementing the harms that it has caused to families, our communities, our standing around the globe, and our economy.

For me, the choice is clear. I encourage leaders in Congress to put this dark episode behind us and deliver a government that works for working families.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

²⁹ The Budget Lab. 2025. "The Revenue and Distributional Effects of IRS Funding." *Yale University*, April 24. <https://budgetlab.yale.edu/research/revenue-and-distributional-effects-irs-funding>.

³⁰ Nichols, Brooke, and Eric Moakley. 2025. "Impact Dashboard." *Impact Counter*, June 23. <https://www.impactcounter.com/dashboard?view=table&sort=title&order=asc>.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Riedl, Jessica. 2025. "The Actual Math Behind DOGE's Cuts." *The Atlantic*, May 8. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2025/05/musk-doge-spending-cuts/682736/>.