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February 25, 2022

Charles P. Rettig  
Commissioner  
Internal Revenue Service  
1111 Constitution Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20224

Dear Commissioner Rettig:

I'm writing to express my concern regarding unacceptable service at the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). My constituents are frustrated with delays in processing tax returns and a lack of responsiveness; I urge you to take immediate steps to address these complaints and ensure my constituents can file their taxes in a timely and painless manner.

I know the IRS faces incredible challenges with the pandemic, budget cuts, and additional responsibilities. However, these challenges have led to an enormous backlog of unprocessed tax returns. According to officials, the backlog of returns is several times the normal amount,<sup>1</sup> and the National Taxpayer Advocate identified "processing and refund delays" as the most serious issues encountered by taxpayers.<sup>2</sup> These delays are particularly harmful to working families who depend on programs like the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit.<sup>3</sup> The IRS' challenges also extend to customer service, as only roughly 11% of calls to the IRS are answered.<sup>4</sup> I was also disturbed to learn that the Treasury Department is predicting a "frustrating season" for taxpayers.<sup>5</sup>

I appreciate the challenges under which the IRS is operating, and I understand that there are multiple priorities to balance. However, processing tax returns and assisting customers must be the IRS' top focus.

To help inform any legislative response to this issue, please answer the following questions no later than March 31, 2022

- How will the IRS address both the growing backlog of returns and inquiry response rate this tax season? With the additional questions that filers will have regarding stimulus payments and the expanded child tax credit, will this plan be sufficient to address these issues?
- This year, the Taxpayer Advocate Services arm of the IRS issued recommendations that would address some of these customer service problems. Of those recommendations, which are being

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/us-policy/2022/01/10/treasury-irs-filing-season/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/national-taxpayer-advocate-delivers-annual-report-to-congress-focuses-on-taxpayer-impact-of-processing-and-refund-delays>

<sup>3</sup> Id.

<sup>4</sup> Id.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/us-policy/2022/01/10/treasury-irs-filing-season/>

implemented and which are not? For recommendations not being implemented, please provide the reasoning for the omission.

- As many taxpayers are unable to reach the IRS to ask questions directly, are there any contemplated changes to increase transparency or otherwise decrease confusion for taxpayers this tax season?
- Are Congressional appropriations necessary to address the backlog? How can Congress best tailor these appropriations to ensure that they are spent helping families with their tax returns? If the IRS expands its ability to process returns, will any other functions of the IRS need additional appropriations, for example, to handle the additional taxpayer appeals?

People rightfully expect quality services from their government institutions. While the IRS is currently under difficult circumstances, there is no excuse for poor customer assistance and an extreme backlog of service. I thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. Please feel free to reach out to my office with any question or if you need any clarifications.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Raul Ruiz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Raul" and last name "Ruiz" clearly distinguishable.

Raul Ruiz, M.D.  
Member of Congress