

AMI BERA, M.D.

6<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

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SELECT SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE  
CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC



## Congress of the United States House of Representatives

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Dear Postmaster General Louis DeJoy,

I write to express my deep concern about the rising number of constituent cases my office receives regarding the security of Cluster Box Units (CBU) for residents living in Sacramento County, California. I formally request that the United States Postal Service provide our office with a briefing on a long-term solution to resolve the ongoing thefts, vandalism, and limited accessibility for residents to retrieve their mail.

Nationwide, [from January to March 2023 alone, there were more than 25,000 reported thefts from cluster mailboxes, compared with 38,500 in all of 2022.](#) In our region, we've seen this rise in thefts mirror the nationwide increase. In Sacramento County, there has been significant increase in vandalism and theft with at least 105 CBUs damaged or stolen in the past several years. These thefts often include high value items such as passports, checks, and essential medication. Previously USPS has taken the responsibility of maintaining, repairing, and replacing the CBUs. However, recent correspondence shared with my office by residents of some neighborhoods, such as Natomas Park shows that this responsibility is being disputed and has been shifted to the neighborhoods' homeowners associations.

An additional issue is stolen CBU keys, and while the keys have been repaired in the past, the locks have not been replaced, provoking recurring theft. The last major concern I have heard from my constituents is that when these unfortunate events occur, residents are forced to travel to a designated post office to retrieve their mail. For example, Natomas Park residents are required to travel to the Royal Oaks Post Office to retrieve their mail. The closest post office to Natomas Park, the North Natomas Post Office, is exclusively a retail post office, not a full-service post office. The Royal Oaks Post Office can be 6 or more miles away for many residents, making it inconvenient and arduous, especially for seniors and the disabled, for them to receive their mail in a timely manner.

Due to theft and stolen key concerns, we request that consideration be made to replace existing and at-risk USPS CBUs in Sacramento County, giving them a more secure design to discourage future vandalism. There is a need for physical safety precautions to be taken because of cases of identity theft, stolen bank account information, etc. This has been a recurring issue for many years, so it is critical that a long-term solution is developed that can be effectively carried out in the near future.

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Additionally, as we work to mitigate and search for a permanent solution, we ask that assistance be provided to the retail post offices in hopes that these locations can provide sufficient access for constituents to receive their mail.

In light of the upcoming holiday season, I request a briefing on a long term solution during the week of October 23, 2023. In addition to the requested briefing, given the real impact of an increase in theft and vandalism for my constituents, I request expedited answers to the following questions by September 22, 2023:

- What is the protocol followed by USPS when CBU keys are stolen?
  - What type of keys are issued for CBUs?
  - What steps are taken to replace locks and keys?
- Is there a written agreement between the Natomas Park Master Association and USPS on who is responsible for maintaining, repairing, and replacing CBUs?
- What is required to turn a retail post office into a full-service post office?

We look forward to your response and hope to speak soon about the ways we can work together to best serve the people of Sacramento County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ami Bera". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.