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November 29, 2023

The Honorable Louis DeJoy
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Washington, D.C. 20260

Dear Postmaster General DeJoy:

I am writing to express my strong opposition to any consolidation of the two United States Postal Service (USPS) processing facilities serving Maine.

USPS recently announced a study to “begin a Mail Processing Facility Review (MPFR) at the Eastern Maine Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC) in Hampden ME.” According to USPS, this study is “to see if it makes operational sense to consolidate the remaining outgoing operations into the Southern Maine P&DC in Scarborough.” A consolidation proposal would not “make operational sense” and would have a detrimental effect on both operational services and postal customers in Maine. Thus, I am requesting that USPS halt all consideration of efforts to consolidate these operations.

In 2012, a similarly misguided proposal was considered and rejected following strong opposition from USPS customers, community leaders, local businesses, and postal employees. After review, USPS recognized the importance of the facility in Hampden to maintaining reliable operations and meeting USPS’ universal service obligation. Maine’s large size makes it impossible for the Postal Service to reliably serve the entire state with just one processing plant in Scarborough. I made this point in 2012 during my testimony at the Postal Service’s public hearing examining the proposal to close the Eastern Maine P&DC. In my testimony, I referenced showing then Postmaster General Patrick Donahue a map of Maine “to illustrate our vast distances.” I am enclosing a recent highway mileage map of Maine to illustrate this point once again. As you may know, Scarborough is located just south of Portland and Hampden is just south of Bangor. More than 130 miles separate the two facilities.

Approximately 350 people attended the 2012 hearing, and the overwhelming sentiment was strong opposition to the closure. In addition to my remarks, former Senator Olympia Snowe, twelve state and local elected leaders, eight postal employees, and several customers spoke on the proposal, all in opposition.

Following the hearing, Deborah Essler, then USPS Northern New England District Manager, was reported by the *Bangor Daily News* as saying that USPS “really wanted to know what the public thought and what you saw tonight was some very well-thought-out content. It wasn’t just emotion and tonight was really perfect the way the crowd conducted itself and gave us specifics to look at.” Over a decade later, the “well-thought-out content” and “specifics” remain the same.

There is a clear geographic necessity for separate postal facilities in Scarborough and Hampden. Mail sent from Fort Kent to Wallagrass, 10 miles away, travels to the center in Hampden, 192 miles away, for processing. It then returns the following day by truck to Wallagrass, which is 182 miles away. These are already long distances, but without the Eastern Maine P&DC, this mail would instead be transported to Scarborough, 322 miles away from Fort Kent, and then get trucked another 312 miles back to Wallagrass.

The Postal Service must avoid cuts that would drive customers to use alternative services. Businesses have made decisions about locating to the area around the Eastern Maine P&DC because of the presence of this facility. Businesses cannot simply relocate to Scarborough, taking jobs vital to the region with them. Postal customers engaged in e-commerce will face needless shipping delays if consolidation occurs. Decisions will be made by these businesses and customers about the best way to proceed, and if they leave the USPS system, they will not come back.

This proposal also jeopardizes the reliable delivery of medication for Mainers who rely on mail order pharmacies and deliveries from federal agencies such as the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs for their prescriptions, a critical concern for the oldest state in the nation. In addition, residents will certainly see their local mail delayed. Since the pandemic, the Postal Service has struggled to maintain reliable service in Maine. Earlier this year, the USPS Office of Inspector General issued a report noting significant deficiencies with mail operations in southern Maine. Consolidation would only add to the documented challenges USPS is facing in providing reliable service.

The interests of local employees should be respected as well. USPS has a well-documented hiring shortage and must continue to meet the workforce where they live, instead of considering the closure of facilities and moving additional operations to locations where the Postal Service already faces hiring challenges.

The notice from USPS stated that "it may be determined that a consolidation should not occur because it would not provide any cost savings or would negatively impact service." This would certainly be the case, and I strongly urge the Postal Service to reject any consolidation proposal.

I appreciate your consideration of these comments. My office is ready to provide any additional information that may be required demonstrating the importance of this facility to the people of Maine.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator