

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

July 28, 2021

The Honorable Janet Yellen
Secretary of the Treasury
U.S. Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C, 20220

Dear Secretary Yellen:

Over the last several months, the Treasury Department has struggled to administer key relief programs critical to the country's economic recovery. During that same period, you avoided a series of opportunities to testify before congressional committees of jurisdiction and answer questions, in public. What initially appeared to be an effort to avoid answering difficult questions from Republicans and Democrats alike now appears to be something more cynical in light of yesterday morning's private meeting with a House Democrat—a coordinated strategy to provide critical information on a partisan *ex parte* basis. In fact, your closed-door meeting to discuss the Department's emergency rental assistance program occurred during a public hearing on that very topic!

Indeed, House Democrats have countenanced your effort to undermine congressional oversight of the Treasury Department by waiving a series of statutorily mandated appearances and refusing to invite you to hearings about programs that affect renters, workers, and small businesses—programs administered by the Treasury Department. On May 26, 2021, you failed to appear at a hearing on the Paycheck Protection Program before the House Committee on Small Business,¹ as required by the bipartisan Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021.² Then, in July 2021, House Financial Services Committee Chairwoman Maxine Waters waived your quarterly testimony pursuant to Section 4016 of the CARES Act.³ Last week, Chairwoman Waters refused a request from Committee Republicans to invite you to a July 20, 2021 hearing on housing matters.⁴ And yesterday, the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis held a hearing on emergency rental assistance and, contrary to a request from Subcommittee Republicans,⁵ Chairman James Clyburn refused to include you among the witnesses.

¹ Press Release, *Committee on Small Business, Committee Republicans Demand Answers on Secretary Yellen's Refusal to Testify on PPP, Defying Law*, July 6, 2021, <https://republicans-smallbusiness.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=403638>.

² Pub. L. No. 116-260 (2020).

³ Press Release, *McHenry Calls for Secretary Yellen to Testify on Emergency Rental Assistance Mismanagement*, July 13, 2021, <https://republicans-financialservices.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=408049>

⁴ *Id.*

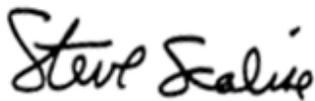
⁵ Press Release, *Scalise Presses Clyburn for Yellen Testimony About Pandemic Rental Assistance Program*, July 21, 2021, <https://republicans-oversight.house.gov/release/scalise-presses-clyburn-for-yellen-testimony-about-pandemic-rental-assistance-program/>.

In a press release issued just minutes after that hearing concluded, Chairwoman Waters announced she met with you “this morning” to discuss “emergency rental assistance to provide relief to families in need.”⁶ To be clear, rather than appear at a public hearing to help renters across the country understand how to access the Treasury Department’s emergency rental assistance program, you opted to meet in private to “discuss a variety of issues” with a Democrat who sits on the very committees you have so assiduously avoided.⁷

We are extremely disappointed at your posture with respect to your statutory and constitutional obligations to provide information to Congress. Our constituents expect answers—they do not benefit whatsoever from partisan, closed door meetings. The White House called for an “all-hands-on-deck effort by state and local governments, courts, community organizations, and the legal community” to reach families in need.⁸ By foregoing a series of opportunities to testify and highlight the urgent need for those key partners to disburse emergency rental assistance funds, you have failed to do your part.

We fully expect you will appear before our committees going forward, in compliance with your statutory obligations and as necessary to help our constituents understand the status of the many Treasury Department programs they are counting on. Please advise immediately as to when you intend to testify before the House of Representatives.

Sincerely,



Steve Scalise
Ranking Member
Select Subcommittee on the
Coronavirus Crisis



James Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight
and Reform



Patrick McHenry
Ranking Member
Committee on Financial Services



Blaine Luetkemeyer
Ranking Member
Committee on Small Business

⁶ Press Release, Rep. Waters Meets with Secretary Yellen, Discusses Implementation of Rental Assistance, July 27, 2021, <https://waters.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/rep-waters-meets-secretary-yellen-discusses-implementation-rental>.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ Dep’t of Treasury Blog Post, “Emergency Rental Assistance Data Shows Programs Ramping Up, but States and Localities Must Do More to Accelerate Aid” (July 2, 2021), <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/2021-07-02-ERA-Data-Blog-Post-vF.pdf>.