

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 26, 2025

Mr. Stephen Ehilian  
Acting Administrator  
General Services Administration  
1800 F Street Northwest  
Washington, D.C. 20405

Dear Acting Administrator Ehilian,

I write to you today to express my strong opposition and deep concern regarding the intended accelerated disposition of the Anthony J. Celebrezze Federal Building in Cleveland, Ohio. This facility is not merely a structure—it is a critical hub for federal operations, a cornerstone for constituent services, and a vital economic anchor for downtown Cleveland. The decision to dispose of this building on an accelerated timeline will deteriorate the ability of the public to interface with its government and harm the economic wellbeing of Ohio's 11<sup>th</sup> Congressional District.

The Celebrezze Federal Building houses more than 4,000 federal employees across multiple critical agencies, including the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). These agencies provide crucial services such as veterans' benefits processing, military payroll management, national security oversight, tax assistance, and employment protections. Relocating these services would disrupt access for thousands of constituents who depend on in-person assistance, particularly veterans and military families who rely on the VBA and DFAS for crucial support.

This decision is especially alarming given the ongoing upheaval within the federal workforce. The Administration's abrupt mandate requiring employees to return to in-person work, coupled with broader efforts to reduce the federal workforce, is already creating instability. Forcing agencies into fragmented leasing arrangements will only exacerbate this disruption, introducing inefficiencies, diminishing employee morale, and ultimately degrading the quality of public services. Moreover, with the Administration simultaneously pushing to reduce the federal footprint by slashing existing leases, there is no guarantee that suitable relocation options will even be secured. The likely outcome is therefore not merely disruption—it is a direct reduction in federal employment in Ohio, with serious consequences for the local economy.

Beyond the operational impact, the economic ramifications of this sale will be significant. The federal workforce in the Celebrezze Building supports Cleveland's downtown economy, sustaining local businesses, public transit systems, and municipal tax revenue. Further, given its size, condition, and prevailing office market dynamics, there is a risk that it will take time for the building to be adaptively reused.

It is critical to Cleveland's economic future for federal agencies to maintain a centralized, public-facing, long-term presence downtown. While relocating agencies might provide a short-term benefit to other office buildings, the long-term effect of divesting from this asset could be a gradual movement of federal agencies further and further from the urban core. This outcome would not only diminish Cleveland's status as a federal hub but also undermine the city's broader economic revitalization efforts, including investments in Public Square, the Sherwin-Williams headquarters, the North Coast Connector, and the Riverfront Plan.

At a time when Cleveland is working to strengthen its downtown economy, this decision moves in the opposite direction. While the Celebrezze Building may require infrastructure upgrades, the costs associated with relocating federal agencies, maintaining private leases, and constructing new facilities could easily exceed the projected renovation expenses. Additionally, the existing maintenance backlog could negatively impact the building's resale value, further undermining any financial justification for the sale.

Rather than abandoning this critical asset, the federal government should prioritize investment in modernization efforts that enhance the building's functionality while maintaining its role as a central hub for public services. Ensuring a stable federal presence in Cleveland is not only a fiscally responsible decision but a necessary commitment to the city's future.

I urge you to reconsider this decision to accelerate the disposal of the Celebrezze Building. At a minimum, I urge you to await the final recommendation from the Public Buildings Reform Board, which to my knowledge, has undertaken a comprehensive review and analysis of the building. I stand ready to collaborate on strategies that protect essential services, support federal employees, and strengthen the economic foundation of downtown Cleveland.

Thank you for your consideration of this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Shontel M. Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Shontel" being more prominent and the last name "Brown" following in a similar style.

Shontel M. Brown  
Member of Congress