

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-1501

March 2, 2020

Chair Karen Tamley  
United States Access Board  
1331 F Street NW, Suite 1000  
Washington, DC 20004-1111

Dear Chair Tamley,

I write to express my concern regarding the accessibility issues at the post office located at 200 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue NE in Independence, Iowa. The steps leading up to the post office's entrance have made it difficult and—in some cases—unsafe for individuals with physical impairments or disabilities to enter the building. A basic accommodation, such as a ramp, could help avoid future injury. I ask for your assistance in addressing this issue immediately.

Over the last year, my office has heard from dozens of residents in Independence and the surrounding community with concerns about the post office and the need for a ramp at the entrance. The post office also sits on top of a steep hill, which makes the staircase the only way to access the front door. This is a serious hazard and last year, a local woman fell trying to enter the post office and had to be transported by ambulance. A ramp and possibly other safety measures are needed to prevent an incident like this from happening again.

I understand that the current accommodation for those who cannot climb the steps is to have them drive up to the back door of the facility to get service. While a postal worker will meet people and provide service at the back door, the person must call the post office ahead of time, give the staff an arrival time estimate, and then wait for the worker out back upon arrival.

Three accessibility complaints have been filed against the Independence Post Office with the U.S. Access Board. These complaints focus on the lack of a ramp at the post office's front door. I understand that despite these complaints, the Independence Post Office has not been found to be in violation of the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (ABA).

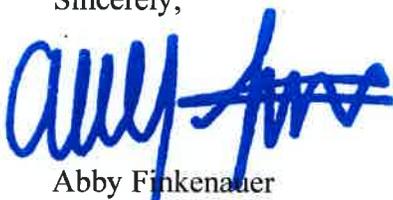
While my office has also filed a formal complaint on behalf of my constituents, based on the outcomes of past complaints and outreach to staff at the U.S. Access Board, it has come to our attention that this building may fall outside of the jurisdiction of the ABA because it was constructed before 1968, the year that the ABA took effect, and that the U.S. Access Board may not be able to help see these necessary renovations through.

This situation is very troubling, and we must do more to ensure safety at a government office. Given the dire need to resolve the issue, I am requesting the following information:

- Are there plans to install a ramp or another accommodation to improve accessibility of the front entrance at the post office? Are there plans to make any other renovations to the building?
- Given the limited accommodation described above which involves customers meeting postal workers behind the building, is this building considered to be fully accessible to individuals with physical impairment and disabilities, including those that are wheelchair bound?
- If the building were to be found in violation of the ABA, what steps would then be taken to remedy the issue?
- Does the building and the stated access issues fall beyond the scope of the ABA? If further review of the building is needed, when can I expect a determination or reply to the complaint filed by my office?
- If the building is not in violation or outside of the jurisdiction of the ABA, what assistance can the U.S. Access Board provide to improve the accessibility and safety of the front entrance?
- What other federal agencies or resources might be available to help remedy the situation?

The United States Postal Service provides my constituents with a critical service that they rely on and trust. Thank you for your time and consideration of my concerns. I look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



Abby Finkenauer  
Member of Congress

CC:

Megan J. Brennan  
Postmaster General and Chief Executive Officer  
United States Postal Service

Robert M. Duncan  
Chairman, Board of Governors  
United States Postal Service