



April 17, 2024

Francis A. Thomas (fran.thomas@gsa.gov)
Regional Administrator
General Services Administration
Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr. Federal Building,
10 Causeway Street,
Boston, MA 02222-1076

Re: Accessibility of JFK Federal Building

Dear Administrator Thomas:

Dignity Alliance Massachusetts has been formed in response to the structural and systemic issues in the delivery of long-term services, support, and care that were exposed in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Dignity Alliance is a state-wide coalition of aging and disability service and advocacy organizations and individuals dedicated to implementing and expanding access to essential care improvements and living alternatives for older adults and people with disabilities.

On Wednesday, February 28, 2024, representatives of Dignity Alliance visited the John F. Kennedy Federal Building, 15 New Sudbury Street, Boston, for a meeting in the office of United States Senator Elizabeth Warren. A member of our delegation with limited mobility utilizes a walker to improve her ability to get around. She found serious accessibility issues to the building that we want to bring to your attention and, hopefully positive action.

As you are aware, the public is entitled to access not only to visit the offices of our two United States Senators (Warren and Markey), but also to visit the Veterans Services Administration, the Internal Revenue Services, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (the agency which handles ADA complaints), and other federal agencies.

- 1. Confusion regarding address:** Senator Warren's website lists her address as 15 New Sudbury Street for people coming to visit her, and this is therefore the address where our colleague told the paratransit van to drop her off when she booked her trip with them. The van could not turn into the driveway at 15 New Sudbury Street, because it is blocked off, so the van driver dropped her off at the end of the driveway, and drove away. She walked up the driveway, and a security guard standing in front of the building asked her if she worked there, and when she said no, he asked why she was there, and she explained she had an appointment with Senator Warren's office. She was told 15 New Sudbury is for staff only to enter and for public access she needed to walk up the hill and turn to the left and enter there. She asked what the address was for that building, so she could have paratransit pick her up there after the

meeting, and was told that the public entrance does not have an address. She was told, however, that once she enters the public entrance, she can come back out to meet paratransit at the 15 New Sudbury Street entrance, he just can't let her into the 15 New Sudbury doors.

2. **Metal detector issue:** Our colleague reports that, on other occasions when she has gone to lobby at the Massachusetts State House, she has been asked if she can let go of her rollator walker, and when she says no, she needs to hold onto it, they take a wand to her and her walker. But that was not the case at the JFK building. A security guard told her to put her walker by one metal detector, and she should walk through the other metal detector. She tried to say that she can't let go of the walker. He didn't seem to understand that. She tried to say that she is a fall risk, but he didn't respond to that, so she pulled her Medic Alert necklace out from under her sweater and showed it to him. The Medic Alert necklace clearly lists she is a fall risk. He read the necklace, and then seemed to understand she had a fall risk, and told her she could go through the detector with the walker, but then again asked her to let go of the walker. She again said she can't let go of the walker. He then asked if she can only hold on with one hand, and that, she can do and did. He moved the wand over one side of her, and then he had her switch which arm was holding the walker and he ran the wand over the other side of her body, and then she was let through. Perhaps JFK could consider the more dignified and efficient approach that the State House uses, to just ask a person with a walker if they are able to let go of their walker and pass through a detector without it, or if they need to hold onto their walker, and then use their wand accordingly.
3. **Brick sidewalk concern:** The brick sidewalk, while attractive, is **not conducive to the use of a rollator walker**, and may also pose a problem for some wheelchair users. The gaps between bricks are of a depth and width that trap walker wheels causing difficulty in guiding the walker for the person with disability.
4. **Disability access signage:** Signage directing a person with a disability to the proper entrance is **insufficient**. Our colleague didn't see ANY signage at 15 New Sudbury Street because a security guard came over to her, after the RIDE had already dropped her off and pulled away. However, while the security guard was talking to her, another person approached, and the guard directed that person to the public entrance. Obviously, she is not the only one who came to the 15 New Sudbury Street entrance expecting to enter. In that instance, the other person went running up the hill, while our colleague cannot run, and it took her a while to walk up the hill and down the block to the long entrance leading into the public entrance.
5. **Drop off area:** For the RIDE, which serves older adults and people with disabilities in Greater Boston, it is the driver's job to walk a passenger to the entrance of a building. However, the driver didn't because he was not safely parked, as there was no available street parking and the gate was down at 15 New Sudbury Street so he was at risk of getting clipped by a car driving by with his van sticking out.

Dignity Alliance appreciates your attention to this matter to correct the ADA deficiencies for the benefit of the public. Please let us know at your earliest convenience your response to our concerns and any schedule for corrective action.

Sincerely,

Paul J. Lanzikos, (paul.lanzikos@gmail.com)

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This correspondence has been endorsed by the twenty-three organizational and individual participants of Dignity Alliance Massachusetts including the following:

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Dignity Alliance Massachusetts is a state-wide, grass-roots coalition of aging and disability service and advocacy organizations and supporters dedicated to systemic transformation to ensure the dignity of older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers. We are committed to advancing new ways of providing long-term services, support, living options, and care while respecting choice and self-determination. Dignity Alliance works through education, legislation, regulatory reform, and legal strategies to realize this vision throughout the Commonwealth.