

UNITED STATES OFFICE OF
GOVERNMENT ETHICS



December 18, 2019

The Honorable Chellie Pingree
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Pingree:

I write regarding your September 27, 2019, letter to Ms. Joanne M. Chiedi, Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Acting Inspector General, raising concerns regarding numerous reports of apparent breaches of public trust by HHS officials. Your letter requests that Ms. Chiedi's office conduct an investigation to determine whether the reported lapses were the result of failures to comply with existing HHS policies or a lack of adequate policies being in place.

In a letter to this office on November 13, 2019, Ms. Chiedi requested that the U.S. Office of Government Ethics (OGE) determine whether a review of HHS policies by OGE is warranted. Today, OGE responded to Ms. Chiedi by letter explaining that OGE neither conducts audits of agency programs for waste, fraud, and abuse—which appears to be the focus of most of your concerns—nor investigates individual wrongdoing. As a result, OGE concluded that investigation of such issues best resides with Inspectors General, as your original letter indicated.

As you know, OGE conducts systemic reviews of each executive branch agency to evaluate the agency's overall compliance government ethics laws and regulations. Although not responsive to your specific concerns, OGE is currently conducting such a review of HHS headquarters and would be happy to share the results of this review with you once it has been completed.

If you have any questions, please contact Shelley K. Finlayson, OGE's Chief of Staff, at 202-482-9314 or at skfinlay@oge.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Emory Rounds". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "E" and "R".

Emory A. Rounds, III
Director

