

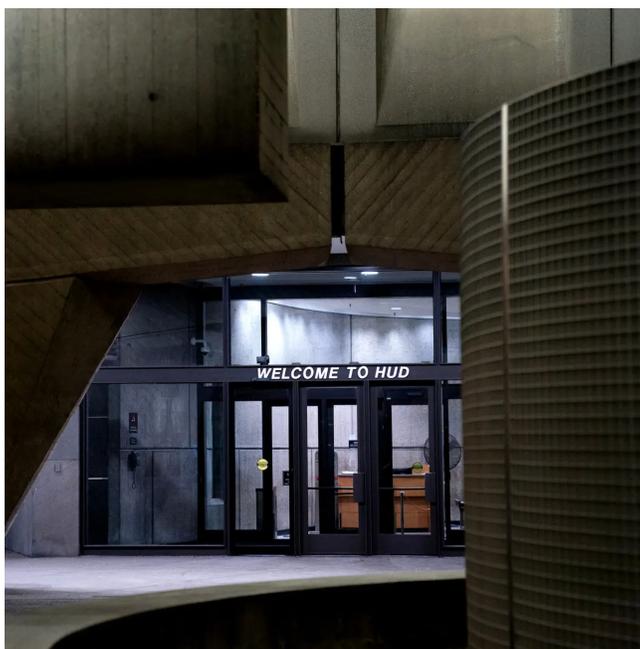
Trump Administration

# DOGE Gains Access to Confidential Records on Housing Discrimination, Medical Details — Even Domestic Violence

by Jesse Coburn

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While some agencies have resisted efforts by Elon Musk's team to access confidential records, HUD has opened the door. The potential harm to privacy could be significant.



The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development headquarters  
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Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency has gained access to a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development system containing confidential personal information about hundreds of thousands of alleged victims of housing discrimination, including victims of domestic violence.

Access to the system, called the HUD Enforcement Management System, or HEMS, is typically strictly limited because it contains medical records, financial files, documents that may list Social Security numbers and other private information. DOGE sought access, and HUD granted it last week, according to information reviewed by ProPublica and two officials familiar with the matter.

This is just the latest collection of sensitive personal information that DOGE has tried to access in recent weeks. It has also sought personal taxpayer data kept by the IRS and information on Social Security benefit recipients, and it attempted to enter the Treasury Department's payment systems. DOGE's

stated mission is to modernize government technology and cut excessive or improper spending. The administration of President Donald Trump has argued that DOGE needs “direct access” to such systems to eliminate “waste, fraud and abuse.”

DOGE’s data-gathering moves at some agencies have sparked forceful pushback, including lawsuits over alleged privacy violations and opposition from career officials who have resigned or retired following access requests. Judges have temporarily blocked DOGE from gaining access to records at the Department of Education, the Office of Personnel Management and the Treasury Department. And, faced with resistance, DOGE agreed to view only anonymized taxpayer data at the IRS.

Few records in the HUD system are redacted or anonymized, and many contain deeply personal material about those who have alleged or been accused of housing discrimination. Domestic violence case files can list addresses to which survivors have relocated for their safety. Harassment cases can include detailed descriptions of sexual assaults. Disability cases can include detailed medical records. Lending discrimination files could feature credit reports and bank statements. The names of witnesses who offered information — in some cases anonymously — about landlords accused of discrimination are among the files as well.

HUD enforces numerous civil rights laws, including the Fair Housing Act and aspects of the Violence Against Women Act and the Americans With Disabilities Act. Such statutes collectively prohibit housing discrimination on the basis of race, sex, national origin, disability and other characteristics.

HUD officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation, voiced concern that DOGE’s access to HEMS could violate the privacy rights of discrimination victims and potentially put them at risk if their information is mishandled or leaked.

The episode is one of many roiling HUD, where the Trump administration is reportedly considering a 50% cut to the nearly 10,000-person workforce. The Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, which combats housing discrimination, may see its roughly 500-person staff cut by as much as 76%, according to an unconfirmed projection circulating widely among HUD employees and viewed by ProPublica.

Civil liberties advocates expressed alarm about DOGE’s access to the HUD data, saying it may violate the Privacy Act. “It’s difficult to see why a system dedicated to civil rights complaints would have any impact whatsoever on a department looking for inefficiencies in governmental spending,” said Cody Venzke, senior policy counsel at the American Civil Liberties Union.

Venzke suggested DOGE may use HEMS data as a basis for scaling back housing discrimination enforcement. “There is deep concern that DOGE is not there to identify government inefficiencies, but rather to shutter programs that the administration disagrees with,” he said.

John Davisson, director of litigation at the Electronic Privacy Information Center, which is suing DOGE and other federal agencies and officials over DOGE’s access, contended that the department had gained access to HEMS and systems like it “under the false pretenses of identifying fraud and abuse, when what’s really going on is DOGE is trying to gain control over these databases to direct the activities of federal agencies.”

Spokespeople for HUD, the White House and DOGE did not respond to requests for comment (including a question to DOGE about what it plans to do with HEMS). After this article was published, Kasey Lovett, HUD’s head of public affairs, emailed ProPublica and stated, “to be clear, DOGE does not have access to HEMS.” Lovett declined to provide on-the-record evidence for her assertion.

HUD’s Fair Housing office receives tens of thousands of housing discrimination allegations or inquiries annually and investigates — or assigns to state or local agencies — around 8,000 of them each year. Those investigations can last months or years and lead to financial settlements, compliance monitoring

and policy reforms by landlords, mortgage lenders, local zoning officials and homeowners associations.

Access to HEMS is usually limited to Fair Housing staffers, HUD attorneys and auditors, and state and local investigators. However, DOGE requested entry, and HUD granted read-only access last week to Michael Mirski, who has a HUD email address and whom officials at the housing agency have identified in internal discussions as being affiliated with DOGE. Mirski did not respond to a request for comment.

**Update, Feb. 26, 2025:** *This article has been updated to include comment from HUD's head of public affairs, which was provided only after the article was published.*

[Doris Burke](#) contributed research.

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I'm tracking how the Trump administration reshapes policy at the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Transportation.



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I cover justice and the rule of law, with a focus on the Justice Department, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia and the federal courts.



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