

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 19, 2026

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Kennedy,

We write you today to express deep concern about the Trump administration's decision to abruptly and unjustifiably terminate a reported \$600 million in public health grants for California, Colorado, Illinois, and Minnesota administered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This funding supports core state and local public health infrastructure in each of these states, and any effort to impose such deep cuts is a threat to public safety. We demand that the administration immediately and definitively reverse course in its effort to rescind critical public health funding from communities in these states.

CDC's priorities statement lists "a commitment to modernizing public health infrastructure and enhancing our approach to health data" as a key strategic priority, alongside "empowering communities and strengthening public health systems for a safer, healthier nation." The administration has allegedly deemed the \$600 million in grant funding as "inconsistent with agency priorities." Despite this claim, the administration's effort guts essential public health infrastructure, as well as testing and treatment for lethal diseases, including HIV. Should the administration move forward with these planned cuts, basic public health infrastructure in California, Colorado, Illinois, and Minnesota will be threatened.

In fact, the Department of Health and Human Services has provided no explanation for how these grants are "inconsistent with agency priorities". That is because there is no defense of these actions on those grounds – a review of the grants being terminated demonstrate that these are overwhelmingly exactly the kind of activities CDC should be supporting in communities across the country. Indeed, only these four states were the subject of terminations, despite every state in the country receiving such funds to conduct virtually identical activities. It appears instead that these grant terminations are politically motivated. Public health threats, including infectious diseases, are not bound by states lines and they do not care about political affiliations. Terminating these grants make those living in the specific communities served by these programs less healthy and it increases the risks to the health of all Americans.

The largest cuts target the Public Health Infrastructure Grant (PHIG) program – funding that serves as the backbone of hundreds of local health agencies. In California, PHIG funds emergency dental services for low-income children, and funds critical health care workforce education, including training for nurses and epidemiologists. Such deep cuts to PHIG funding would also result in hundreds of job terminations for public

health workers who have dedicated their careers to protecting communities in California. In Illinois, cuts to PHIG would eliminate approximately one hundred employees from the Illinois Department of Public Health—upending financial stability for workers and their families and reducing the state’s capacity to prevent lead poisoning in children and monitor disease outbreaks. The loss of PHIG funding in Colorado will significantly degrade public health infrastructure and capabilities across the State, ranging from reduced diabetes care for low-income residents, to elimination of resources for rural Coloradans who lack access to local care providers, to harming the State’s ability to respond to immediate public health needs and future public health emergencies. In Minnesota, these grant terminations will lead to the immediate termination of 75 Minnesota Department of Health FTEs, immediate loss of organizational support for 50 rural local public health departments, including two very small “frontier” public health departments, and elimination of core public health activities, including the norovirus and food safety program which includes a statewide foodborne illness complaint system, making it riskier for Minnesotans to trust the food supply of real, whole foods. In addition, these cuts to public health funding will jeopardize Tribal health programs in California, Colorado, and Minnesota that address chronic disease and uphold the federal government’s treaty obligations.

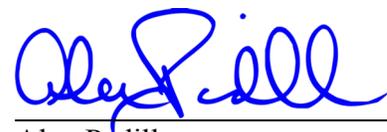
These latest grant terminations also fall on the heels of your recent attempt to terminate 2,800 grants and \$2 billion in funding supporting mental health and substance use prevention and treatment programs nationwide, as well as your attempt to pause all activities under CDC’s PHIG program nationwide. Those actions were so reckless and deadly that both decisions were reversed within 24 hours. Effectuating similar terminations to lifesaving public health programs, but targeting them to Democratically governed and represented states is solely vindictive and should be immediately reversed. Funding provided by CDC has improved the well-being and health status of communities across the United States. Investment in public health infrastructure nationwide is essential to achieving this administration’s stated goals of improving population health, strengthening resilience, and reducing long-term healthcare costs. Weakening this infrastructure diminishes our collective ability to respond to emerging health threats, leaving our country more vulnerable.

To that end, we demand the Trump administration immediately and definitively reverse all efforts to gut CDC public health funding for California, Colorado, Illinois, and Minnesota, and to abandon this kind of politically-motivated effort in other states. The safety and health of our communities should not and cannot be contingent on political whims, and we look forward to working with you to ensure robust support for America’s public health infrastructure.

Sincerely,



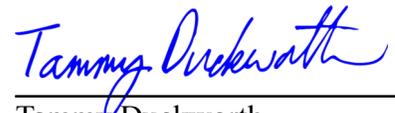
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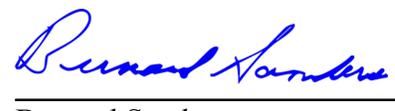
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