

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 3, 2026

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

The Honorable Alex J. Adams, PharmD, MPH  
Assistant Secretary  
Administration for Children and Families  
Department of Health and Human Services  
330 C Street SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Kennedy and Assistant Secretary Adams:

As the Senators representing the state of California, we write to express our outrage at the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) recent move to freeze \$5 billion in Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) funding to California. The Trump Administration's (the Administration) targeting of bipartisan, congressionally mandated funding is a direct attack on working families and on Congress' legislative function and appropriations power. These blatantly unlawful decisions undermine affordability and harm American families. While a federal judge, in granting and extending a temporary restraining order, has recognized the need to act in the public interest to prevent irreparable harm, the Administration must immediately abandon this attempt to illegally withhold funding from California.

The three Administration for Children and Families (ACF) programs are critical to state and national efforts to combat poverty and provide support for vulnerable children, seniors, and people with disabilities. The state of California's FY 2025 allotment of \$1.1 billion under CCDF – allocated based on a statutory formula – makes affordable and high-quality child care accessible to a monthly average of 176,300 children in 107,500 families. The \$3.7 billion in TANF grants funds the state's CalWORKs program, which provides cash assistance to eligible low-income families with children. Approximately 350,000 Californian families benefit from this program each year, helping them pay their rent, afford groceries, and pay for other essential services. Like with CCDF funding, TANF is allocated according to a statutory formula. SSBG funding, which is allocated based on each state's percentage of the national population, enables California to fund daycare programs for 1.1 million children and social services for 380,000 people with disabilities.

Freezing these programs and delaying funds, even temporarily, will force families across the state to choose between working or caring for their children. This disruption in child care and other assistance could have larger and irreparable impacts on regional economies, removing parents from the workforce, shuttering care facilities and limiting choice, and straining state budgets. This move is particularly egregious given the affordability crisis Americans are facing as a direct result of this Administration's failed economic policies.

Additionally, the January 6, 2026, letters from ACF to Governor Gavin Newsom notifying the state of the freezes reveal that the referenced "potential for extensive and systemic fraud" is merely a pretext for political retribution. The letters fail to include any evidence of the alleged

fraud within the State of California. ACF's unfounded accusations of fraud and disingenuous data collection efforts suggest that, rather than seeking to legitimately tackle fraud, waste, and abuse, this exercise is just another escalation of the Administration's attacks on California and other states led by Democrats.

Given the lack of transparency and the potentially disastrous impacts of these grant freezes on American families, we request detailed responses to the following questions by February 16, 2026:

1. What are the specific legal authorities that the Administration is using for the funding freeze for each ACF program? What is the statutory and/or regulatory basis to freeze all CCDF, TANF, and SSBG funds for an entire state?
2. How does HHS's request for personally identifiable information comply with federal privacy laws?
3. What, if any, assessments were made about the potential near- and long-term impacts of a funding freeze on the elderly, children, and families that rely on these programs? Please provide documentation associated with these assessments.

These threats by the Trump Administration have caused significant alarm and confusion in targeted states. It is unconscionable that any Administration should be allowed to punish children, families, and elderly individuals based on their place of residence and the political leadership of their state. It is imperative that the Administration reverse course to limit the economic harm to American children, seniors, and families.

Sincerely,



Adam B. Schiff  
United States Senator



Alex Padilla  
United States Senator