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October 27, 2025

The Honorable Russell Vought
Director
Office of Management and Budget
727 17th Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Vought,

We write to demand that you reinstate the thousands of employees who were unlawfully terminated via Reduction in Force (RIF) announcements earlier this month. Even before the shutdown began, the Administration threatened that should a shutdown occur, it would lay off federal workers.¹ On Friday, October 10, the country learned that the Administration had followed through on those threats after your social media post announcing, "The RIFs have begun."² While relevant agencies have confirmed that their staff were impacted, government officials have provided little detail to Congress or the general public, leaving us to rely mostly on media reports and social media posts regarding the dismissal of staff from various agencies.

Civil servants at the Department of Education (ED) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) were among those targeted by the recent firings. These Departments and the programs they administer ensure that children and families can thrive in their communities and ensure that those living in this country are safe, healthy, and educated. These Departments were already operating at critically low staffing levels since the Administration began issuing widespread RIFs starting earlier this year. The elimination of even more staff severely undermines the ability of the Departments to faithfully execute the law.

In the area of health and human services, press reports³—confirmed multiple days later by the Department itself⁴—indicate that the firings of HHS personnel were widespread, impacting multiple agencies that protect the health and welfare of some of our most vulnerable constituents. Among those terminated were a staggering 1,300 employees of the Centers for Disease Control

¹ Irie Sentner & Jennifer Scholtes, *Vought sounds layoff siren: 'The RIFs have begun'*, Politico, Oct. 10, 2025, <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/10/10/vought-sounds-layoff-siren-the-rifs-have-begun-00602262>.

² @russvought, Twitter, Oct. 10, 2025, <https://x.com/russvought/status/1976686105199268177>.

³ Sentner & Scholtes, *supra* note 1.

⁴ Email from HHS to Committee Staff regarding "HHS Personnel Action as of 101425," Oct. 14, 2025, on file with Committee Staff [hereinafter HHS Staff email].

and Prevention (CDC).⁵ Underscoring the reckless and callous nature of these terminations, many of the CDC terminations were done in error and then haphazardly reversed.⁶

CDC bore the brunt of the HHS terminations, but agencies such as the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), also lost hundreds of employees collectively.⁷ Other impacted agencies include the Office of Community Services (OCS), which administers several of the anti-poverty programs within the Committee's jurisdiction that support economic mobility. OCS administers the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), a program focused on community-driven solutions to assist low-income individuals and families to achieve economic independence, as well as the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which assists eligible households to pay for their home energy needs.⁸ Following an earlier RIF conducted in April, it is unclear whether there are *any* remaining staff to administer either program at OCS.⁹ Notably, LIHEAP is already not funded at the level needed to serve every household struggling with utility costs; in fact, the program serves roughly one in five eligible households.¹⁰ While Congress has routinely provided funding for both CSBG and LIHEAP, this Administration has made it no secret that it wants to eliminate both programs, as proposed in its Fiscal Year 2026 budget proposal.¹¹ Instead of trying to prevent service disruptions for Americans living in poverty during the government shutdown, this Administration appears to be taking the opportunity to achieve its own policy objectives through destruction of these two federal programs by targeting the personnel who administer them, a clear subversion of the law.

In the education space, the Trump Administration cut 465 employees at ED via RIFs after the shutdown began.¹² These cuts included staff at the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE), the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), the Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE), the Office for Civil Rights (OCR), and the Office of

⁵ Sophie Gardner, *Union: HHS mistakenly terminated about 700 CDC employees*, POLITICO PRO (Oct. 13, 2025), <https://subscriber.politicopro.com/article/2025/10/union-hhs-mistakenly-terminated-about-700-cdc-employees-00606475>

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ HHS Staff Email, *supra* note 4.

⁸ *Impacts from October 2025 Shutdown RIFs*, Data Foundation, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1nxhVyDIA1t0gkJtalxnfJdM68R8rxz3ioUu8Ptjnirk/mobilebasic?usp=embed_facebook (last visited October 14, 2025).

⁹ In addition to the RIF conducted on October 10, 2025, reportedly, all personnel administering the LIHEAP program were terminated earlier this year. See Joseph Shapiro, *HHS layoffs hit Meals on Wheels and other services for seniors and disabled*, NPR (Apr. 1, 2025), <https://www.npr.org/sections/shots-health-news/2025/04/01/g-s1-57716/hhs-layoffs-seniors-disabled-liheap-acl>.

¹⁰ Letter from Mark Wolfe, Exec. Dir., Nat'l Energy Assistance Directors Ass'n, to the Honorable Robert F. Kennedy, Sec'y, U.S. Dep't of Health and Hum. Services, (Apr. 15, 2025), [https://neada.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/LIHEAPReleaseofFundsApr2025.pdf#:~:text=LIHEAP%20\(%20Low%20Income%20Home%20Energy%20Assistance,a%20child%20under%20the%20age%20of%20six](https://neada.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/LIHEAPReleaseofFundsApr2025.pdf#:~:text=LIHEAP%20(%20Low%20Income%20Home%20Energy%20Assistance,a%20child%20under%20the%20age%20of%20six).

¹¹ U.S. Dep't of Health and Hum. Services, Admin. for Child., Families, and Communities, Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees: Fiscal Year 2026 1 (2025), <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/fy-2026-acfc-cj.pdf>.

¹² E-mail from Dep't of Educ. Staff to Committee Staff regarding "Department of Education Information – Reduction in Force", Oct. 15, 2025 (on file with staff) [hereinafter ED Staff Email].

Communications and Outreach (OCO).¹³ Among those terminated were an impactful 137 from OCR, 121 from OSERS, 132 from the OESE, among others. All of these cuts will impact a wide range of students' ability to access an education. It is particularly worth noting that these RIFs are in addition to staff cuts the Administration made at ED earlier this year.¹⁴ Prior to the October 10 RIFs, OCR reportedly only had five offices remaining open—down from 12 regional offices at the beginning of the year.¹⁵ And now, some of those remaining staff were cut further. This makes it impossible for a resolution of outstanding claims of discrimination and is contributing to the growing backlog of cases at OCR.

The reduction of staff at OCR will make it even more difficult for the office to “ensure equal access to education and to promote educational excellence through vigorous enforcement of civil rights in our nation’s schools.”¹⁶ Multiple federal courts have already found that previous RIFs at OCR have likely hampered its ability to do the job mandated to it by Congress under the law.¹⁷ OESE supports states and districts in their work on elementary and secondary education, such as reviewing state plans that describe how states will ensure students are receiving equitable access to educational resources. Without adequate staff, it is unclear how ED will even determine if states and districts are adhering to the *Every Students Succeeds Act*. OSERS was established to ensure that states and localities are supporting students with disabilities and that disabled youth and adults have access to vocational rehabilitation services to help them succeed in employment. This Administration has claimed that they will support students with disabilities, yet it has cut grants without a meaningful opportunity for grantees to appeal¹⁸ and now it has decimated the office, leaving the question of who will meaningfully operate the programs.

Other offices within ED faced significant impact as well. For example, OPE is rumored to have terminated its office of Student Support Services, which administered the TRIO program, as well as many staff in the office that supports programs for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). Without critical staff in these offices, we are not confident the Administration is committed to helping the students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds that these programs serve.

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ Press Release, U.S. Dep’t of Educ., U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force, Mar. 11, 2025, <https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-force>.

¹⁵ Cory Turner, *Union says Education Dept. ’s civil rights office was hit hard by shutdown layoffs*, NPR (Oct. 15, 2025), <https://www.npr.org/2025/10/15/nx-s1-5575131/union-says-education-dept-s-civil-rights-office-was-hit-hard-by-shutdown-layoffs>

¹⁶ See e.g. U.S. Dep’t of Educ., Office for Civil Rights (OCR), (last accessed: Oct. 15, 2025), <https://www.ed.gov/about/ed-offices/ocr>.

¹⁷ See *Victim Rights Law Center v. McMahon*, No. 25-1787 (1st Cir., Oct. 1, 2025) (“We note the district court’s careful analysis concluding that the Department’s decision to reduce by half the staff of OCR, a statutorily-created office, imperils Congress’s mandate that OCR “enforce federal civil rights laws that ban discrimination based on race, sex, and disability in the public education system.” Indeed, by Congress’s design, OCR is to serve a key role in furthering equal access to public education in the United States by ensuring the implementation of federal legislation like the Civil Rights Act, as well as the promise of *Brown v. Board of Education*.” (internal citations omitted)).

¹⁸ See e.g., Kara Arundel, *3 takeaways from Linda McMahon’s confirmation hearing*, K-12 Dive, Feb. 13, 2025, <https://www.k12dive.com/news/linda-mcmahon-education-secretary-confirmation-hearing/740121/>.

It is for these reasons that we call upon you to immediately reverse the layoffs and engage in a transparent manner with Congress. Without it, the education, health, and safety of those in our country hangs in the balance.

Sincerely,



Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Ranking Member



Joe Courtney
Member of Congress



Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Mark Takano
Member of Congress



Alma S. Adams
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Donald Norcross
Member of Congress



Lucy McBath
Member of Congress



Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress



Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress



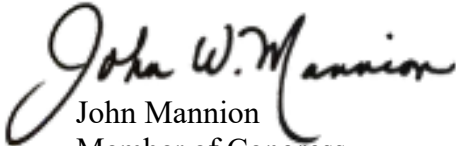
Haley M. Stevens
Member of Congress



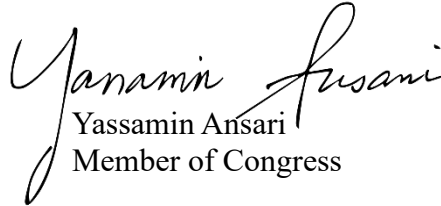
Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



John Mannion
Member of Congress



Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Linda E. McMahon, Secretary, U.S. Department of Education
The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human
Services
The Honorable Tim Walberg, Chairman, House Committee on Education and Workforce