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April 8, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Kennedy:

I write regarding the March 27, 2025, announcement of the restructuring of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that will fundamentally alter the structure of HHS and lead to a further reduction in force of 10,000 full-time employees.¹ This will result in a total downsizing of HHS by 20,000 full-time employees, or 25 percent of the workforce, when factoring in the previous early retirement efforts and other efforts aimed at incentivizing staff to leave the agency.² Even more concerning, many of the HHS employees terminated last week may have been done so in error.³ Based on what has been publicly revealed to date, what you are undertaking will destabilize—and, in some cases, even *decimate*—programs and services on which some of the most vulnerable people in America rely. **I strongly urge you to go back to the drawing board, engage with Congress on organizational plans, and commit to transparency about those plans.**

The entirety of the proposed reorganization lacks both detail and thoughtfulness. For example, the plan to eliminate the Administration for Community Living (ACL)—which was created to more efficiently coordinate and deliver programs enhancing independent living for older adults and people with disabilities—lacks clarity on how ACL's programs will be distributed across other HHS agencies. The elimination of ACL will undoubtedly have devastating impacts on older adults, caregivers, and people with disabilities.⁴ HHS is proposing to move "[c]ritical programs" within ACL to other HHS agencies,

¹ *HHS Announces Transformation to Make America Healthy Again*, U.S. Dep't of Health & Hum. Servs. (Mar. 27, 2025), <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/hhs-restructuring-doge.html> [hereinafter Reorganization Announcement].

² *Id.*

³ Cheyenne Haslett, *RFK Jr. announces HHS reinstating some programs, employees cut by mistake* (April 3, 2025, 4:11 PM), <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/rfk-jr-announces-hhs-reinstating-programs-employees-cut/story?id=120463293>.

⁴ Howard Gleckman, *Trump Abolishes The Office That Supports Many Seniors and People with Disabilities*, *Forbes* (Mar. 27, 2025, 6:08 PM), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/howardgleckman/2025/03/27/trump-abolishes-the-office-that---supports-many-seniors-and-people-with-disabilities/>.

with no clarity on how ACL's programs will be divided across these agencies.⁵ In fact, one of the agencies slated to absorb ACL's work is itself slated to be reorganized and merged with yet another agency.⁶

Additionally, I am concerned that the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), one of the five agencies that will be consolidated into the new Administration for a Healthy America (AHA),⁷ may be so gutted by layoffs that it will be unable to perform its important work.⁸ NIOSH plays an important role in protecting workers' health by conducting research on worker safety and health, developing recommendations on occupational injury and illness prevention, and stimulating innovations in mine safety technology.⁹ Without information from the questions posed to you in my letter sent with Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Workforce Protections Ilhan Omar, dated February 19, 2025,¹⁰ it is impossible to assess how these changes will impact NIOSH's ability to complete the tasks Congress has set before it.

Moreover, given the importance to vulnerable families of the vital programs currently housed in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), much more information is needed about the impact of your reorganization plans on that agency. ACF supports the economic and social well-being of children, families, and communities by preventing child abuse and neglect, assisting survivors of domestic violence, supporting low-income families in heating and cooling their homes, and administering the popular Head Start program.¹¹ While the brief announcement on the HHS restructuring did not highlight any cuts to ACF, according to press reports, cuts were widespread. Staff members at five of ACF's ten regional offices were included in the layoffs on April 1, 2025;¹² the entire Division of Energy Assistance was terminated.¹³ The HHS announcement also noted that programs from ACL will be integrated into ACF.¹⁴ Given both firings and additional responsibilities, it is unclear how ACF's current functions and priorities will shift.

The abovementioned concerns are by no means exhaustive. Despite the stated goal of restructuring HHS to "Make America Healthy Again,"¹⁵ the actions taken by the Department are likely to significantly negatively impact public health.¹⁶ In order to understand the full extent and impact of the

⁵ Reorganization Announcement, *supra* note 1.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ Alexander Tin, *RFK Jr.'s Layoffs Expected to Gut Worker Safety Agency NIOSH, Officials Say*, CBS NEWS (Mar. 31, 2025), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/rfk-jr-layoffs-hhs-niosh-worker-safety-agency/>.

⁹ *About National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/about/index.html> (last visited Apr. 1, 2025).

¹⁰ Letter from Reps. Robert C. "Bobby" Scott & Ilhan Omar to the Hon. Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. (Feb. 19, 2025), https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/scott_omar_letter_to_niosh_regarding_staff_cuts.pdf.

¹¹ *What We Do*, Administration for Children & Families, <https://acf.gov/about/what-we-do> (last visited Apr. 1, 2025).

¹² Alana Semuels, *The Trump Administration Just Gutted U.S. Health Institutions. What Will That Mean for Americans' Health?*, TIME (Apr. 1, 2025, 3:33 PM), https://time.com/7273450/trump-administration-gut-health-institutions/?itm_source=parsely-api.

¹³ Joseph Shapiro, *HHS layoffs hit Meals on Wheels and other services for seniors and disabled*, NPR (Apr. 1, 2025, 7:47 PM), <https://www.npr.org/sections/shots-health-news/2025/04/01/g-s1-57716/hhs-layoffs-seniors-disabled-liheap-acl>.

¹⁴ Reorganization Announcement, *supra* note 1.

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ Semuels, *supra* note 12; Carla K. Johnson, *Mass layoffs are underway at the nation's public health agencies*, AP News (Apr. 1, 2025, 7:05 PM), <https://apnews.com/article/health-human-services-layoffs-restructuring-rfk-jr-ec4d7731695e4204970c7eab953b2289>; Howard Gleckman, *Trump Abolishes The Office That Supports Many Seniors and People with Disabilities*, Forbes (Mar. 27, 2025, 6:08 PM), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/howardgleckman/2025/03/27/trump-abolishes-the-office-that---supports-many-seniors-and-people-with-disabilities/>.

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.

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restructuring of HHS and staffing decisions, I request your responses by no later than April 22, 2025, to the following:

1. Explain the decision-making process and rationale for the reorganization of HHS, including how the roles and divisions being eliminated were decided.
2. Provide detailed analysis on the impact of the reorganization on the services provided by the Department, as required under federal statutes.
3. Provide detailed information on which programs and services currently delivered by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health (OASH), Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), and NIOSH will continue to operate within the newly created AHA as well as which will be eliminated in the transition.
4. Provide the number of HHS staff who have been terminated (1) since January 20, 2025, and (2) as part of the restructuring and reduction in force announced March 27, 2025.
 - a. For each HHS staff member terminated, provide an Excel spreadsheet with the following:
 - i. Termination date;
 - ii. Division;
 - iii. Program, subdivision, or, where there is no relevant formal subdivision, any identifiable functional area;
 - iv. Job title;
 - v. Classification on the General Schedule pay scale;
 - vi. Number of years of federal service.
 - vii. Purported justification for termination; and
 - viii. Whether the staff member was terminated in error.

Please send all official correspondence and information related to this request to the Committee on Education and Workforce's Democratic staff by emailing Ni'Aisha Banks at NiAisha.Banks@mail.house.gov. If you have questions about this request, please contact Carrie Hughes with the Committee on Education and Workforce's Democratic staff at Carrie.Hughes@mail.house.gov. As I await answers to the above questions, I remind you that the stakes are high. Families need heating assistance, workers are being exposed to toxic hazards, and older adults and caregivers are struggling to maintain a decent quality of life. Accordingly, I call upon you to stop the implementation of the current reorganization scheme, pause the layoffs of thousands of dedicated public servants, and engage in a transparent manner with Congress on any reorganization initiative.

Sincerely,



ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable Tim Walberg, Chairman, Committee on Education and Workforce