

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 11, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Kennedy,

We write to express our real concern about the Department and Health and Human Services' (HHS) actions to terminate federal funds for state and local health departments, fire critical public health staff, dismantle health agencies, and close regional offices, including the HHS Region 5 office in Chicago, Illinois. Your decision puts the health and well-being of our people at risk, and will do nothing to "Make America Healthy Again."

In March, it was reported that HHS would be terminating \$11.4 billion in federal funding for state and local health departments, including more than \$125 million for Illinois. We also have been informed that Illinois will not be able to access an additional \$324 million in anticipated federal funding for future work to prevent and address infectious disease. The Illinois Department of Public Health has leveraged these federal funds to improve its technologies and laboratories, support the public health workforce, and strengthen local health departments. However, the state's efforts to prepare for future public health emergencies—which could include the worsening avian flu situation, measles outbreaks, and other respiratory illness challenges—will be severely hampered if HHS rescinds this essential federal funding. Now that a federal court has blocked HHS from terminating these funds, we urge you to abandon these ill-conceived and dangerous plans.

It also was announced that an additional 10,000 public health workers will be fired from HHS, including 3,500 from the Food and Drug Administration, 2,400 workers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1,200 workers from the National Institutes of Health, and 300 workers from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. This is on top of the reported 10,000 HHS employees who have already left the agency since January 20, including probationary employees who were fired earlier this year, many of whom were not rehired, despite two court rulings ordering their reinstatement. A reduction in force of this magnitude threatens the ability of HHS to ensure the safety of our nation's foods, drugs, and medical devices; to inspect and regulate nursing homes; to develop breakthrough cures and treatments for patients with cancer, ALS, and heart disease; and to respond quickly when a public health crisis emerges.


Finally, it was reported that HHS would dismantle and consolidate several health agencies under an “Administration for a Healthier America,” and close several regional offices, including the HHS Region 5 office in Chicago. HHS Region 5 has been an essential partner in implementing and coordinating federal resources and initiatives. It has worked with state, local, and tribal governments in Illinois to address a range of public health concerns, including infectious disease outbreaks, mental and behavioral health needs, food recalls, and more. Eliminating this office or consolidating it into another regional office risks reducing access to agency personnel and HHS resources for Illinois.


It is one thing to undertake efforts to address waste, fraud, and abuse in government. It is quite another to cite these reasonable goals as an excuse to instead decimate our nation’s public health infrastructure. HHS has provided no details on its plans or any explanation of how these steps will improve HHS’ ability to carry out its mission to enhance the health and well-being of all Americans. The complete lack of transparency on these critical decisions supports the logical conclusion that these decisions were made for political purposes without considering their real-world impact.

As HHS Secretary, you are tasked with the serious responsibility of protecting our nation’s health and you have the opportunity to make a positive difference in the lives of millions of Americans. Do not neglect this responsibility, and do not waste this opportunity.


Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your timely response.

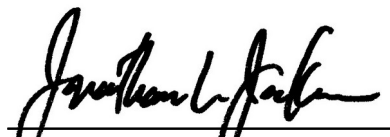
Sincerely,

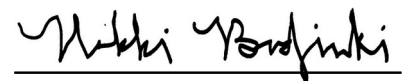

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

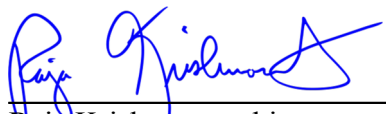

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator


Mike Quigley
Member of Congress

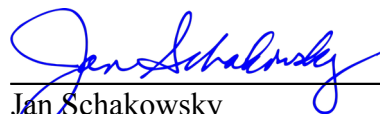

Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress


Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress

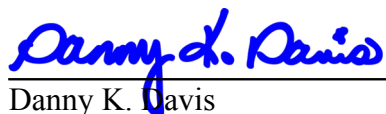

Nikki Budzinski
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



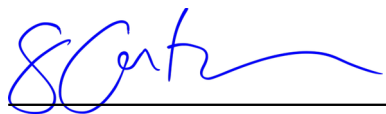
Robin L. Kelly
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Jesús G. "Chuy" García
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