

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy Jr.  
Secretary  
United State Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20201

June 3, 2025

Secretary Kennedy,

I write with concern about the harmful impact that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) funding cuts and firings are having on the health of the millions of Americans living with HIV. The actions that you have taken as part of this administration to fire researchers and cancel funding into essential research put millions of lives at risk and threatens decades of progress in the fight to end HIV. Moreover, these decisions reflect a reversal of President Trump's 2019 creation of the "Ending the HIV Epidemic in the U.S.", or EHE initiative, which sought to significantly reduce new HIV infections across the country. I call for an immediate reinstatement of HHS funding to the programs dedicated to HIV and AIDS, and request a detailed response on administration personnel and resources that will be dedicated to prevent, diagnose, treat, and respond to HIV in the U.S.

This administration has dangerously hampered HIV response efforts by firing staff and cutting research funding across HHS – not to mention cancelling more than 200 grants for HIV research this year. On Friday May 30<sup>th</sup>, HHS cancelled funding for a broad swath of vaccine research, including two major HIV vaccine research efforts that were first funded by the NIH in 2012. This threatens innovative approaches to ending the spread of HIV infection. Your ongoing crusade to undermine public trust in vaccines will have profound harmful impacts for communities across this country, and this latest step will specifically threaten future generations at risk for contracting HIV. Researchers have clearly stated that the HIV pandemic will never end without a vaccine, and the decision to eliminate this research will lead to more deaths. I strongly encourage you to remove yourself from the scientific work being done by professionals at agencies across HHS and allow the vaccine research community to continue their noble work to prevent HIV.

Over a million people in this country are living with HIV/AIDS, including more than 100,000 in New York State and over 60,000 in New York City alone. As a result, New York has a strong network of individuals dedicated to ending the spread of HIV infections and improving the lives of people with HIV, based on 25 years of scientific investment and coalition building. The elimination and weakening of key federal programs - the HIV/AIDS Epidemic Initiative, the CDC's Division of HIV Prevention, the Minority AIDS Initiative, the Ryan White HIV/AIDS

program and NIH funding – will have ripple effects across New York. This funding is not only used by the nation’s leading academic medical centers, many based in New York, but also to pioneer community-based interventions that serve as models for the entire country. While the HIV community is resilient, these indiscriminate cuts threaten the very fabric of HIV response.

These cuts not only threaten people’s lives, but also their livelihoods by creating an additional financial burden for communities across the country. Estimates show that ending federal funding for HIV prevention will lead to 143,000 more people becoming infected within 5 years, an additional 127,000 who will die of AIDS-related causes, and an additional \$60 billion in excess medical costs. Moreover, the current reconciliation bill supported by the Republican party threatens to kick 14 million people off Medicaid. Since 40% of adults with HIV are covered with Medicaid, we will see more people seek needed medical care at later times and without any insurance coverage, adding more costs to the entire healthcare system. These threats to Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act will only worsen the medical care provided to people with HIV and completely contradict the public support you lend to investing in preventive care.

The HHS funding cuts and firings are destroying this nation’s ability to respond to HIV. Just six years ago President Trump publicly committed to slowing the spread of HIV infections with the eventual goal of reducing infections by at least 90% in 2030. This goal now proves laughable in the fact of these reckless decisions to cancel innovative research funding and take a chainsaw to the community-based programs that allow for people with HIV to live healthy, long lives.

I call for an immediate reinstatement of HHS funding to the programs dedicated to HIV and AIDS, and request a detailed response on administration personnel and resources that will be dedicated to prevent, diagnose, treat, and respond to HIV in the U.S. Please provide a written response to this letter by July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025.

Sincerely,



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Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senator