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July 13, 2026

The Honorable Russell Vought
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Vought,

I write in opposition to the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) proposed rule on federal financial assistance (Fed. Reg. Vol. 91, No. 103, Friday May 29, 2026).¹ If finalized, this proposal would politicize the grantmaking process and create significant barriers and harmful uncertainty for the recipients of federal grants in my district and across the country.

In my district, and the broader Houston region, local governments, law enforcement, nonprofits, and many other organizations rely on a consistent federal grantmaking process to provide vital services to my constituents and to people across our region, as do people across the country. In Houston, federal grants fund multi-year research into medicine and energy that often outlasts any one administration. Those who do this research rely on a predictable federal grant process to make this cutting-edge and much-needed work possible. Whether they are discovering new cures to fight disease or innovating new technologies to move our country forward, they need to know that the federal funding they apply for will be awarded objectively and won't be suspended or terminated by political appointees or for political reasons.

As you know, if finalized, this rule would require senior political appointees to ensure that "proposals selected for funding are consistent with applicable law, Federal agency priorities, and the national interest," including "ensuring that discretionary awards advance the President's policy priorities," (Fed. Reg. Vol. 91, No. 103, Friday May 29, 2026).² This proposed rule would make political review a formal and required component of the award process while reducing the role of peer review recommendations, fundamentally undermining the role of independent

¹ Office of Management and Budget, *Regulation for Federal Financial Assistance*, 91 Fed. Reg. 32198, 32216 (May 29, 2026) (Proposed Rule).

² *Ibid.*

academic review in the scientific grant process. Houston is home to the largest medical complex in the world, where cutting-edge medical research takes place and lives are saved because of a strong partnership with the federal government and federal investments in medical and scientific research at many institutions. Houston's medical institutions receive grants based on scientific merit that support critical research for the advancements in the treatments of diseases ranging from cancer to Alzheimer's to rare genetic disorders. Substituting expert recommendations for the opinions of political appointees is detrimental to U.S. scientific progress and will almost certainly result in promising projects being overlooked and delays in advancements in the treatments of diseases.

The proposed rule will also give federal agencies the authority to “to terminate awards” if an agency determines that the funded activities are “found to be inconsistent with program goals or agency priorities,” (Fed. Reg. Vol. 91, No. 103, Friday May 29, 2026)³. Federal agencies can move to terminate awards in certain specific circumstances, but this proposed rule would expressly authorize the potential termination of an award or an entire class of awards if an agency determines that the programs no longer advance “federal agency priorities, and the national interest,” (Fed. Reg. Vol. 91, No. 103, Friday May 29, 2026)⁴ as those priorities are defined at the time the termination decision is made. These changes make long-term federal funding unpredictable and greatly increase the risk that ongoing projects could be suspended or terminated before completion. Put simply, this proposal amounts to a waste of taxpayer resources.

The proposal also explicitly injects partisan, unclear terms into the grantmaking process, while claiming to provide greater clarity. Grant recipients would be forced to speculate how the Administration will interpret terms like “diversity, equity, and inclusion,” and “anti-American ideologies,” (Fed. Reg. Vol. 91, No. 103, Friday May 29, 2026)⁵ since OMB provides no definition in this rule. In my home state of Texas, black women in Texas have a pregnancy-related mortality ratio of 39 deaths per 100,000 live births—more than 2.5 times higher than that of white women.⁶ Congress has directed several agencies, like the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to study disparities in health outcomes like this. Under this proposal, it is unclear if researchers will be able to continue utilizing federal grants to study pressing issues like Texas' black maternal health crisis, since the proposed rule prohibits science related to “diversity, equity, and inclusion,” and does not define what that term means. Once again, this will cause uncertainty for grantees and turn applicants away from pursuing funding, blunting federal programs created by Congress to serve our constituents.

³ Office of Management and Budget, *Regulation for Federal Financial Assistance*, 91 Fed. Reg. 32198, 32216 (May 29, 2026) (Proposed Rule).

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Texas Women's Healthcare Coalition, *Black Maternal Health Week*, <https://www.texaswhc.org/activities/black-maternal-health-week/>

By putting political judgment ahead of scientific expertise, OMB's proposed rule makes federal funding less predictable and harms our communities. Researchers, universities, and nonprofit organizations would have less confidence that their work won't face suspension or termination before completion based on changing agency priorities or political action. Additionally, by indiscriminately determining policy for grant recipients, OMB is attempting to circumvent Congress's primary role in appropriating funds and directing their purpose. This proposal seeks to diminish Congress's role in directing federal spending with the President's agenda and priorities. It will become significantly more difficult for every community, organization, or research institution in this county to access and obtain federal funding in the face of changing political priorities. I urge you to rescind this proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lizzie Fletcher". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lizzie" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Fletcher".

Lizzie Fletcher

Member of Congress