

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 6, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Kennedy,

We are deeply concerned by the Department of Government Efficiency's ("DOGE") reckless staff reductions at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). SAMHSA staff work in supporting our shared mental health and addiction prevention, treatment, and recovery priorities. Recent reporting notes that the agency lost 1 out of 10 of its staff, including team members responsible for the operation of the 988 National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

It has also come to our attention that almost all staff located in Regions Four and Five have been terminated. Currently, the SAMHSA website no longer lists the staff contacts for those regions. Even more concerning, we are told that additional reductions of up to 50 to 70 percent of SAMHSA's staff are under consideration. Cutting SAMHSA employees without understanding the impact is extremely dangerous given the behavioral health crises impacting every corner of our nation.

From October of 2023 to September of 2024, overdose deaths in the United States decreased by nearly 24 percent after trending upward for nearly two decades. SAMHSA staff have been instrumental in supporting this decline in deaths. SAMHSA staff have worked to increase access to the life-saving drug naloxone and have helped promote evidence-based treatment for both mental health and substance use disorder treatment. They also ensure that addiction treatment is safe and available by ensuring that Opioid Treatment Programs (OTPs) comply with federal regulations. There are at least 1,500 of these opioid treatment programs across the country who are relying on this support. Without adequate staff at SAMHSA, OTPs cannot operate, and patients will not receive addictions medications, counseling and other behavioral health services. SAMHSA staff certify mobile medication units which are critical in increasing access to medications for opioid use disorders especially in rural areas. Without SAMHSA staff, these mobile medication units won't be deployed in our communities.

SAMHSA staff also support providers with the most updated evidence-based practices to treat patients. SAMHSA staff at the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) work with states to administer the Substance Use Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Services (SUPTRS) Block Grant which helped serve over 2.5 million people with lifesaving substance use disorder prevention, treatment, and recovery services. SAMHSA staff in the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) have worked to ensure that states and communities have access to the most up to date, evidence-based prevention strategies, which have resulted in among the lowest rates

of non-use of any substance among middle and high school students ever recorded by the Monitoring the Future Study.

From 2002 to 2022, suicide deaths in the United States generally increased; with a tragic spike in the post-pandemic years after briefly trending down from 2018 to 2020. In 2023, over 49,000 Americans died by suicide. Given these statistics and the current mental health crisis, we are deeply concerned by reports that nearly 25 percent of the team working on 988 awareness campaigns have been cut. As of January 2025, 988 has fielded an astounding 14 million calls, texts, and chats while the Veteran's Crisis Line (VCL) has routed nearly 2 million contacts since July 2022.

SAMHSA staff at the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) also work with states to manage the Mental Health Block Grant (MHBG) which helped serve approximately 2 million individuals with serious mental illness and children with serious emotional disturbances. SAMHSA staff oversee technical assistance centers that ensure that providers across the U.S. know how to best treat and support those with mental health and substance use disorders, ranging from eating disorders to schizophrenia to alcohol addiction. Without this support for the workforce, individuals seeking treatment may not receive the most effective, evidence-based care, potentially leading to poorer health outcomes, increased relapse rates, and greater strain on healthcare systems. A fully staffed SAMHSA is essential to continued success.

Given the effects that HHS and DOGE's actions are expected to have on the agency's mission and operations, we ask that you provide the following information by March 10, 2025:

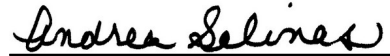
1. A list of employees who have been terminated since January 20, 2025, including a copy of SAMHSA and DOGE's charts and other documents reflecting staff reduction plans by program office and further disaggregated by field office and DC headquarters.
2. A specific line-item by line-item analysis of the impact of SAMHSA staffing reductions in the 50 percent range. Please produce any written communications including texts, emails, memorandums, white papers and other documents indicating whether the intent of the proposed staffing reductions is to shut down SAMHSA programs by eliminating the staff needed to administer them.
3. A detailed list of the types of employees terminated (schedule a, veterans, disabled veterans, military spouses, etc.).
4. A detailed analysis of the impact on the Veteran's Crisis Line from 988 funding cuts.

We strongly urge you to reconsider these cuts and stop any further cuts before fully informing Congress of any impacts to overdoses, suicides, and access to mental and behavioral health treatment. Too many people across the country are suffering without necessary resources. We must ensure that SAMHSA staff are there to ensure those lifesaving resources reach our communities. Please respond to this letter by March 10, 2025. We appreciate your prompt attention.

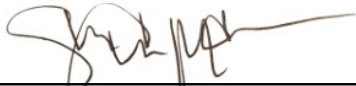
Sincerely,



Paul Tonko
Member of Congress



Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress



Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick
Member of Congress



Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress



Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



JM Tokuda
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



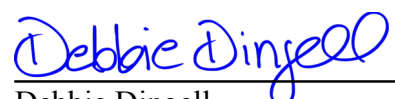
Raul Ruiz, M.D.
Member of Congress



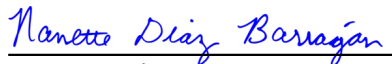
Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress




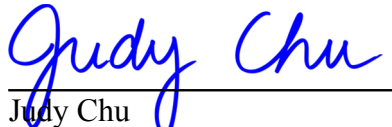
Joseph D. Morelle
Member of Congress




Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

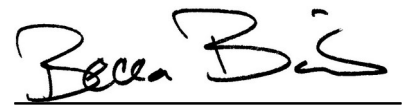

Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress

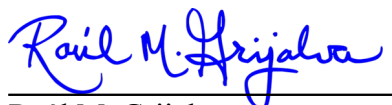

Maxine Waters
Member of Congress


Judy Chu
Member of Congress



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
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Rick Larsen
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Becca Balint
Member of Congress

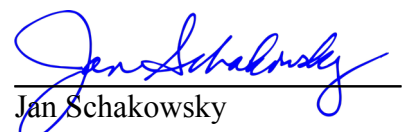

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Seth Magaziner
Member of Congress

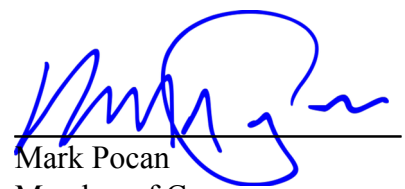

Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress


Troy A. Carter, Sr.
Member of Congress


Lori Trahan
Member of Congress

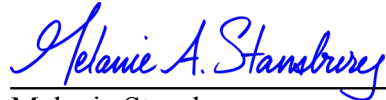

Jan Schakowsky
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Brittany Pettersen
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Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



Kathy Castor
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Melanie Stansbury
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Rashida Tlaib
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Shri Thanedar
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Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



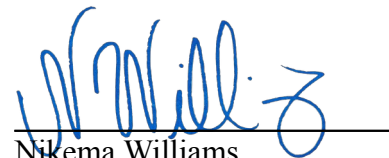
Doris Matsui
Member of Congress



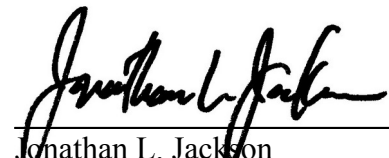
Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



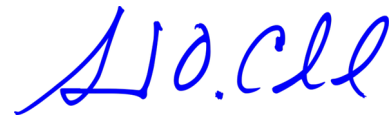
Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



Nikema Williams
Member of Congress



Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress



Salud Carbajal
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Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Lizzie Fletcher
Member of Congress



Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



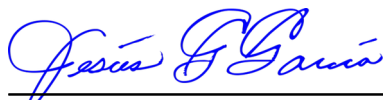
Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



Robert J. Menendez
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



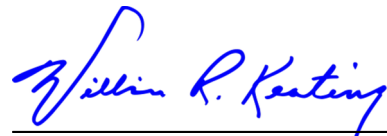
Greg Landsman
Member of Congress



Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress



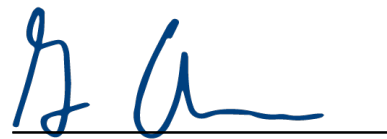
Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress



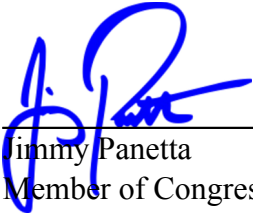
William R. Keating
Member of Congress



Jennifer L. McClellan
Member of Congress



Gabe Amo
Member of Congress



Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress