

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 20, 2026

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

Dear Secretary Kennedy:

We write regarding the recent decision by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to issue termination notices for more than 2,000 active grants nationwide, and subsequent reversal of those cancellations within 24 hours. While we are relieved that these terminations have reportedly been rescinded, the episode raises serious legal, operational, and governance concerns that demand explanation.

The issuance of mass, immediate termination notices for duly awarded and congressionally appropriated grants created chaos and upheaval across the nation's mental health and substance use treatment infrastructure. Community mental health centers, addiction treatment providers, overdose prevention programs, and peer recovery organizations were thrown into crisis, leaving many providers unable to meet payroll, continue services, or assure patients that life-saving care would remain accessible. For providers already operating on razor-thin margins, even a brief disruption in funding carries real and lasting consequences.

These grants support essential services, including substance use disorder treatment, medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD), overdose reversal and prevention efforts, crisis response and suicide prevention, and services for pregnant and postpartum individuals. Funding for many of these programs was just recently reauthorized by Congress on a bipartisan basis under the SUPPORT Act. Furthermore, the abrupt issuance of termination notices without warning, explanation, or apparent statutory basis – as was reported – is inconsistent with federal grant law, congressional intent, and basic principles of sound administration. Cancelling these grants would have jeopardized critical work being done on the frontlines of the opioid crisis, which directly contradicts this administration's own stated goals to tackle the opioid crisis.

Although HHS has since reversed course, much damage has already been done. Some staff were laid off or put on notice, services were paused, and trust between patients in need of these services and their providers has been permanently undermined. This is unacceptable, particularly during the ongoing public health emergency related to overdose and amid a nationwide mental health crisis.

Accordingly, we request detailed responses to the following questions:

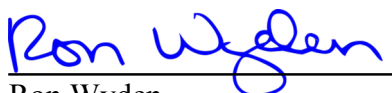
1. Given that these grants were funded with congressionally appropriated dollars and, in many cases, explicitly authorized by statute, how did the Department determine that terminating them was permissible under appropriations law?

2. Who approved the decision to issue these termination notices? Please identify the offices and senior officials involved in reviewing and authorizing this action.
3. How did SAMHSA conclude that programs supporting overdose prevention, MOUD, crisis response, and community mental health services no longer aligned with the agency's statutory mission or federal priorities?
4. Why were grantees given no advance notice, transition period, or explanation – as is required under federal law – before receiving termination letters that were effective immediately? How does this comply with federal grant management standards and due process expectations?
5. What assessment, if any, did HHS or SAMHSA conduct regarding the potential impact of these terminations on patient safety, overdose risk, suicide prevention, and community capacity before issuing the notices?
6. What prompted the Department to reverse the terminations within one day? Did the Department realize that the terminations were illegal, or did Department officials belatedly realize the harm they were inflicting?
7. What steps is HHS taking to ensure that a similar breakdown in decision-making does not occur again and that grantees are not subjected to abrupt, destabilizing actions in the future?

The federal government has an obligation to administer programs lawfully, transparently, and responsibly, especially when lives are at stake. While we appreciate the Department's decision to reverse the grant cancellations, that action alone does not resolve the serious concerns raised by these actions.

We expect prompt, complete responses to the questions above and look forward to continued oversight to ensure SAMHSA's programs are administered in accordance with the law and the intent of Congress. The nation's mental health and substance use treatment system cannot afford further disruption or uncertainty.

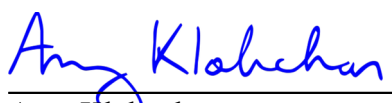
Sincerely,




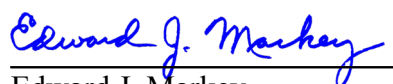
Ron Wyden
United States Senator





Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Angela D. Alsobrooks
United States Senator

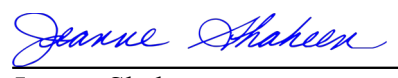

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

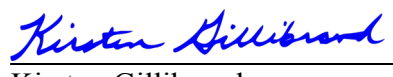

Tina Smith
United States Senator

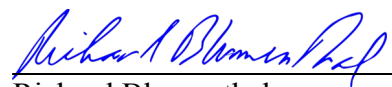

Jack Reed
United States Senator


Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator


Jacky Rosen
United States Senator


Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator
Ranking Member,
Subcommittee on
Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related
Agencies
Committee on Appropriations


Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator


Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



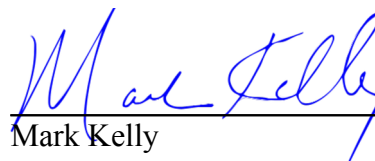
Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



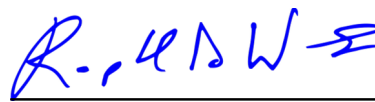
Gary C. Peters
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Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
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