

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3203

February 17, 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 write to express deep concern about and demand reversal of the reckless staffing cuts to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) World Trade Center Health Program (WTCHP). This program has provided lifesaving health monitoring and treatment to thousands of 9/11 first responders, impacted area residents and workers and survivors all across the country in every State and in 434 of 435 Congressional Districts for nearly 15 years. It is extremely worrisome that the Trump administration's proposals to indiscriminately cut federal employees will have a direct impact on the quality and accessibility of care provided to those who answered the call on 9/11 and are now sick with respiratory ailments, cancer and other conditions.

As you know, the WTCHP has provided critical screenings, services, research and medications to thousands of Americans at zero cost for 9/11-related health conditions and diseases. Since the establishment of the WTCHP in 2011, the number of program enrollees has more than doubled from 61,000 to 132,000.¹ This growing population of first responders and survivors, which was just expanded by bipartisan legislation to cover additional 9/11 Military and Civilian responders to the Pentagon and Shanksville PA crash site, highlights the need for elevated staffing and funding levels, rather than a nonsensical and dangerous 20 percent staffing reduction which puts the effective functioning of this vital program at risk. It is critical that the Trump administration uphold the funding and structure of the WTCHP that has been strengthened over the years through bipartisan agreements.

In our meetings with you prior to your confirmation as Secretary, you committed to working with Congress to ensure that 9/11 first responders and survivors continue to get the care they need. We ask that you uphold your commitment by reversing the rash and counterproductive termination of WTCHP staff and provide answers to how you will ensure continuity of quality care for WTCHP enrollees.

We also request a briefing by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and CDC detailing the changes that have been made to the WTCHP and how these changes will directly impact the program's capacity to provide lifesaving care to current and future enrollees. In addition, we ask for you to provide detailed plans you will take as Secretary to strengthen the services provided to 9/11 first responders and survivors, as you committed to doing in our meetings with you.

¹ Program Statistics. CDC 9.11 World Trade Center Health Program. Mar. 31, 2024.
https://www.cdc.gov/wtc/ataglance_2024_0331.html#enrollmentWTC.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senator