

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 29, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Kennedy:

We are writing to express our strong opposition to the disbandment of the Administration for Community Living (ACL), the closure of ACL's Regional Offices, and the unjustified termination of nearly half of the agency's workforce¹, all of which threaten the delivery of critical services for our nation's seniors, people with disabilities, families, and caregivers. Millions of Americans rely on the ACL's supportive services—such as Meals on Wheels, caregiver supports, respite, and adult protective services—to live independently and with dignity. We are gravely concerned about your arbitrary directive to dismantle the ACL and urgently request answers to understand the wide-ranging consequences this decision will have upon the health and wellbeing of older adults and individuals with disabilities.

ACL's workforce plays a crucial role in managing and coordinating federal, state, and local programs aimed at helping seniors and people with disabilities remain healthy and thrive in their homes and communities. Established in 2012, the ACL was created to eliminate fragmentation in federal programs for aging and disability populations, improve access to quality healthcare and long-term services, and ensure consistent policies across federal agencies.² The Older Americans Act (OAA) authorizes funding for various ACL-administered programs and activities, providing nearly \$1.9 billion in 2024.³ The ACL oversees grants for state and community programs on aging, including nutrition services, in-home care, transportation, legal assistance, and research.⁴ For example, the ACL manages funding for research, training, and demonstration projects, such as the Alzheimer's Disease Program, Chronic Disease Self-Management Education Program, Elder Falls Prevention Program, and the Senior Medicare Patrol Program.⁵ The ACL is also responsible for funding and overseeing disability programs under the Developmental Disabilities Act to support people with disabilities and their families through the State Councils on Developmental Disabilities and University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDDs), and to protect people with disabilities from abuse and neglect through the Protection & Advocacy programs. Moreover, the ACL administers the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program and the Elder Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Prevention Program. These programs advocate for the rights of residents in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities and train professionals

¹ National Public Radio, *Widespread firings start at federal health agencies including many in leadership* (April 1, 2025).

(<https://www.npr.org/sections/shots-health-news/2025/04/01/g-s1-57485/hhs-fda-layoffs-doge-cdc-nih>).

² Federal Register, *Statement of Organization, Functions, and Delegations of Authority; Administration for Community Living* (March 18, 2012). (<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2012/04/18/2012-9238/statement-of-organization-functions-and-delegations-of-authority-administration-for-community-living>).

³ Congressional Research Service, *Older Americans Act: Overview and Funding* (May 6, 2024). (<https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R43414>)

⁴ *Ibid*

⁵ *Ibid*

in elder abuse prevention.⁶ Additionally, the ACL manages the State Health Insurance Assistance Program, which offers cost-free, unbiased Medicare guidance to seniors, people with disabilities, and their families.⁷ Lastly, The ACL also funds and administers the independent living programs, the state Assistive Technology Programs, and the Aging and Disability Resource Centers to help people get the supports they need to live in the community instead of nursing homes or other institutions.⁸

We understand that HHS has eliminated the staff of entire offices within ACL—seemingly eliminating these offices altogether. For example, the Center for Policy and Evaluation plays a critical role in supporting the Assistant Secretary for Aging in her role as the advisor to the HHS Secretary on aging and disability policy, engaging across HHS to ensure policies consider the needs of these populations, and evaluating the effectiveness of programs consistent with statutory requirements. We understand that all staff in that office have been fired. Finally, we understand that virtually all staff in the Center for Management and Budget, including the budget and grant staff that distribute and monitor funding, have been terminated. Finally, your announcement to eliminate all of ACL’s regional staff will put the direct work with local grantees, particularly the regional staff’s critical coordinating role during natural disasters and other emergencies, at risk.

We are also deeply concerned with your decision to dissolve the ACL and reallocate whichever programs and functions HHS unilaterally decides to keep. We understand from HHS’ April 2nd fact sheet, *HHS’ Transformation to Make America Healthy Again*, that HHS plans to dismantle unspecified ACL functions across agencies, such as the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE), and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).⁹ On April 16th, a draft budget proposal from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) was made public, outlining the proposed elimination of the ACL’s Elder Falls Prevention, Long-term Care Ombudsman, Elder Rights Support Activities, etc.¹⁰ Additionally, the proposal recommended eliminating ACL’s Nutrition and Disability Services programs, including the State Councils on Developmental Disabilities, Paralysis Resource Center, Limb Loss Resource Center, etc.¹¹ Lastly, the proposal suggested shifting the aging programs to CMS, the disability and nutrition programs to ACF, and the National Institute of Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR), along with the UCEDD’s, to the Office of Strategy.¹² ACL has been successful in coordinating across the aging and disability networks, ensuring that limited resources can reach most people. Spreading ACL’s programs across three separate agencies will undermine the efficiencies that have been created by housing these programs together.

Given the severe impacts that ACL’s disbandment and mass staff firings will have on the health of seniors and people with disabilities, we request that you respond to the following questions **no later than May 20th**:

⁶ *Ibid*

⁷ *Ibid*

⁸ *Ibid*

⁹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Fact Sheet: HHS’ Transformation to Make America Healthy Again* (April 2nd, 2025). (<https://www.hhs.gov/press-room/hhs-restructuring-doge-fact-sheet.html>)

¹⁰ Inside Medicine, *New: A 64-page HHS restructuring proposal outlines sweeping cuts to US public health* (April 16th, 2025). (<https://insidemedicine.substack.com/p/new-a-64-page-hhs-restructuring-proposal>)

¹¹ *Ibid*

¹² *Ibid*

1. Sec 201 of the OAA establishes the Administration on Aging and mandates that it be led by an Assistant Secretary for Aging. It is the Assistant Secretary's duty to provide technical assistance and best practices to States, Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), and Aging and Disability Resource Centers, on how to coordinate services with health care organizations.¹³ **With the elimination of the ACL, which point person will uphold the responsibilities previously held by the Assistant Secretary for Aging and oversee the federal, state, and local coordination of aging and disability services?**
2. We are deeply troubled by your directive to divide unspecified remaining ACL programs and allocate them across several agencies such as ACF, ASPE, and CMS. This decision is particularly alarming given the recent substantial staff terminations within these very same agencies. **Given the insufficient staffing, how will you ensure that these agencies are equipped to take on additional responsibilities under ACL's new organizational structure? With ACL's programs spread across multiple departments, how do you plan to ensure effective coordination among them and the entities with which ACL coordinates to promote access to services for people with disabilities (including the Department of Labor, Department of Education, and others)?**
3. The proposed OMB draft budget suggests the elimination of ACL's Aging Programs, Nutrition and Disability Services Programs, and the NIDILRR and the UCEDD's. It also calls for the elimination of discretionary funding for the Aging and Disability Resource Centers and the State Health Insurance Assistance Program. **If these proposed cuts are implemented, what concrete steps will be taken to address the critical needs these programs currently meet for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and their families?**
4. The ACL administers billions of dollars in grants annually to state and local governments and nonprofit organizations that offer services and supports for nearly 10.1 million seniors and people with disabilities.¹⁴ It has been reported that staff at ACL's Center for Management and Budget, who are responsible for overseeing ACL's grants and contracts, have been terminated. **How will you guarantee that funds continue to be delivered in a timely manner to the 56 State Units on Aging (SUAs), 614 AAAs, over 280 Title VI Native American Aging Programs, and tens of thousands of local service providers? Can you guarantee that services and supports to disabled people and older adults will not be disrupted?**

Sincerely,

¹³ United States. Older Americans Act of 1965, as Amended. Washington, D.C. :Administration on Aging, Office of Human Development Services, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1978.

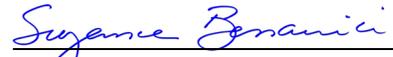
¹⁴ Administration for Community Living, *ACL Grants Overview*, <https://acl.gov/grants> (October 22nd , 2024)



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Doris Matsui
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



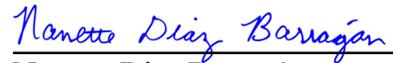
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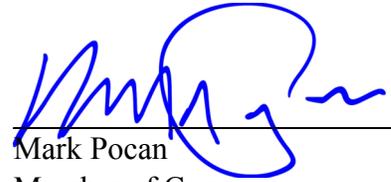
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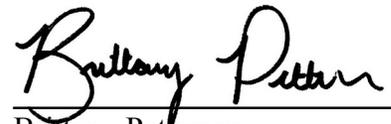
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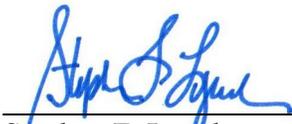
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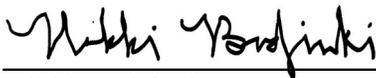
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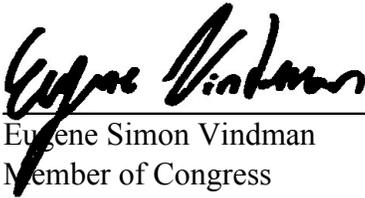
Angie Craig
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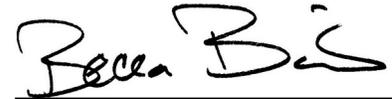
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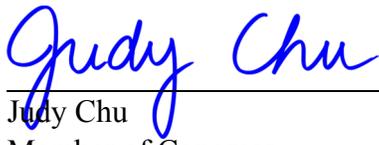
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