

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 21, 2025

Dear Secretary Kennedy, Acting Director Monarez, and Commissioner Makary,

We write to express deep concerns regarding the impact your drastic staffing cuts at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) will have on efforts to reduce smoking and other tobacco use. Dozens of staffers at the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Center for Tobacco Products (CTP) have been placed on administrative leave, including the Center's director, and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Office on Smoking and Health (OSH) has been gutted. These actions risk undermining progress that has been made in reducing the death, disease, and addiction caused by tobacco use. Without these critical staff, we are concerned that more youth will start using tobacco products, fewer people will quit, and more people will become ill and die from tobacco-caused disease.

Tobacco use remains the leading preventable cause of death in the United States and is responsible for about \$240 billion in health care costs every year. More than 16 million Americans are currently living with a tobacco-caused disease, including chronic diseases such as cancer, heart disease, respiratory disease, and diabetes. Nearly 500,000 Americans die each year from tobacco use, making up one in every five deaths in the United States.

Tobacco use has been described as a pediatric disease because almost all tobacco use begins during adolescence. Tobacco companies have a long history of making and marketing products that appeal to kids. E-cigarettes, for example, come in a wide variety of kid-attracting flavors and expose users to high doses of nicotine and other harmful substances. In fact, e-cigarettes have been the most popular tobacco product among youth since 2014. Last year, 1.6 million middle school and high school students were e-cigarette users with many of them using e-cigarettes frequently or daily, an alarming sign of addiction.

We cannot make a serious effort to reduce chronic disease and protect children's health without addressing the harm caused by tobacco. Yet the drastic reductions in force at HHS has led to the removal of key officials at the CTP, a center at the FDA created by Congress under the bipartisan *Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act*. Without adequate personnel, CTP will not be able to meet its statutory requirement to enforce the law and effectively conduct premarket reviews of new tobacco products and prevent the entry of products that will increase youth tobacco use. CTP already has an extensive backlog of premarket applications and has had difficulty stopping unauthorized e-cigarettes from entering the market. Fewer employees will only make matters worse. Severe reductions in regulatory personnel also will cripple FDA's ability to establish product standards to reduce the appeal, addictiveness, and harm of tobacco products.

The firing of thousands of staff at HHS also effectively eliminates CDC's OSH, which plays a critical role in preventing youth tobacco use and helping adult tobacco users to quit. Eliminating this office will deprive states of the only dedicated source of federal funding for state tobacco prevention and cessation programs. It also means the end of its national public education campaign, Tips from Former Smokers, which helped about one million people to quit, prevented an estimated 129,100 smoking-related deaths, and saved about \$7.3 billion in health care costs

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

from 2012 through 2018. Eliminating OSH will not improve efficiency. Instead, it will only cost lives and increase health care expenses.

Given the significant ramifications of the HHS proposed reorganization on the federal government's ability to protect kids from nicotine-addiction and to reduce chronic diseases caused by tobacco use, we request responses to the following questions by Friday, April 25, 2025.

- How many total FDA CTP employees have lost their jobs? How many have lost their jobs as a result of:
 - The recent reductions in force announced by the Department on March 27, 2025 (including transfers to other federal agencies)?
 - The termination of probationary employees?
 - Other Administration efforts to reduce the federal workforce (e.g., early retirement and Fork in the Road)?
- For each office within FDA CTP (e.g., Office of the Director, Office of Management, Office of Regulations, Office of Science, Office of Health Communications and Education, and Office of Compliance and Enforcement), how many people have been removed from their positions and how many remain?
- Which directors of offices within FDA CTP have been removed from their positions, placed on administrative leave, or transferred to other federal agencies?
- Does FDA CTP intend to spend the \$712 million in tobacco user fees authorized under the *Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act* and included in the FY 2025 Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act (P.L. 119-4)? Please indicate how CTP intends to spend its tobacco user fees for FY 2025, including, but not limited to, dollars spent on premarket review, enforcement of marketing and sales of illegal products, and Tobacco Centers of Regulatory Science.
- What functions of CTP have been transferred to other offices at FDA or to other agencies? To which offices or agencies were they transferred?
- What functions of CTP have been eliminated?
- How many employees does CDC OSH currently have? What are their roles and functions?

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

- Have any of the programs and activities, including data collection, previously run by CDC OSH been transferred to other agencies? To what other offices or agencies were they transferred to?
- The FY 2025 Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act (P.L. 119-4) allocated \$125.85 million from the Prevention and Public Health Fund to CDC OSH. How does the Department plan to spend this money if CDC OSH has been eliminated?
- Will states no longer receive federal grants from the National and State Tobacco Control Program (NTCP) to support state and local tobacco control programs? If so, when will states be notified of this loss in federal funding?
- Does the proposed elimination of CDC OSH mean that the highly effective media campaign, Tips from Former Smokers, will end? What about Tips ads for which air time has already been purchased? When do you anticipate the current Tips ad buy (both on Over-the-Top [OTT] and Over-the-Air [OTA] platforms) will conclude?
- Will the proposed elimination of CDC OSH eliminate federal funding for quitlines and cause state quitlines to reduce the services they can provide and the number of people they can serve?

Sincerely,

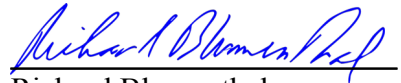
Sincerely,



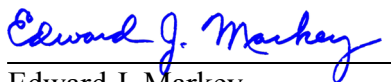
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



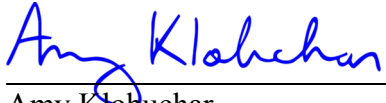
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator

United States Senate

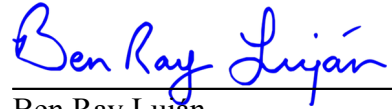
WASHINGTON, DC 20510



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



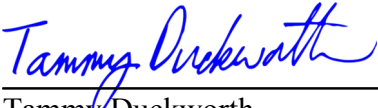
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



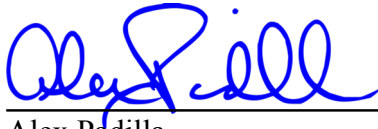
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



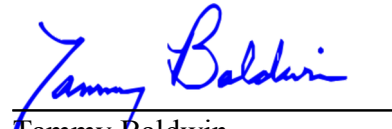
Angela Alsobrooks
United States Senator



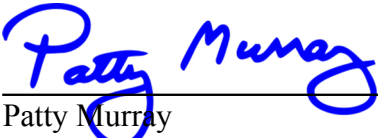
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



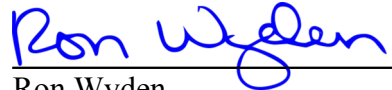
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator