



August 12, 2026

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

Dear Secretary Kennedy,

We write to express our profound concern and unequivocal opposition to the recent mass cancellations of lifesaving health research grants administered by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) as well as the year-long refusal to faithfully execute the Fiscal Year (FY25) and Fiscal Year (FY26) appropriations laws. This unprecedented action, which has led to the disruption of nearly 200 different research programs across nearly 30 states, undermines decades of taxpayer investments to improve healthcare delivery, patient safety, and health outcomes for all Americans. We demand that you immediately rescind these cancellations and ensure that the funding Congress appropriates to AHRQ is invested in health research in accordance with the law.

On July 15, 2026, approximately 150 AHRQ grantees received a generic form letter notifying them that their grants were canceled, effective immediately.¹ For many, this was the first notice or communication that they have received from AHRQ in nearly a year. The grant cancellation letters cite regulations that require the Agency to consider the grantee's progress and management practices and the availability of funds, yet none of the notices substantively address any of these factors. Instead, these cancellation notices list a series of Agency priorities that do not appear in the subsections cited. Further, many of the grants that were canceled were explicitly investigating the topics that AHRQ has described as a priority. The cancellation letters, which were sent to a broad range of grantees, use the exact same language, which is evidence that the agency is categorically denying grants without making individual grant determinations.

A small sample of the research programs that were just devastated include:

- Work in Connecticut on training rural healthcare workers to better respond to maternal medical emergencies;
- Research in New York on how to improve healthcare delivery systems for patients to access home dialysis;
- A program in Colorado that reduces risk factors for patient falls in rural hospitals;
- Work in Utah to reduce antibiotic overuse at hospital discharge;

¹ AcademyHealth. "AHRQ Has Begun Canceling Research Grants. Here's What We Know." July 16, 2026. <https://ahsituationreport.substack.com/p/ahrq-has-begun-canceling-research>
Science. "Trump administration ends dozens of grants for studying patient care." July 17, 2026. <https://www.science.org/content/article/trump-administration-officially-ends-dozens-grants-studying-patient-care>

- Research in Wisconsin testing the use of artificial intelligence to improve the experience of hospitalized children and their families;
- A grant in North Carolina that improved autism screening, diagnosis, and services among Black children;
- Research in Maryland to improve patient safety via telehealth;
- Work in Virginia to equip primary care providers with more effective chronic pain treatment to reduce reliance on opioids; and
- Research in Michigan on patient financial burden after a COVID-19 infection.

This is just a fraction of the important work that has been permanently discontinued, despite years of work and millions of taxpayer dollars that were invested to advance our understanding of effective healthcare delivery.

This recklessness is not the only crisis facing the Agency. Since October 1, 2025, the Agency has only awarded 5 percent of the funds available for extramural grants.² Grantees were left in limbo, without notice or clarification, in some cases for over a year. Programs across the country were forced to layoff staff, discontinue research, shutdown programs, or not pursue new research opportunities at all. In 2025, AHRQ lost 80 percent of its staff, including the vast majority of those working to vet grant applications and work with grantees, so there is no one left to adequately manage the programming mandated by statute.³

We want to be clear: Democrats and Republicans did not work together to appropriate funds for AHRQ as a gentle suggestion for the Department to follow at their discretion or leisure. We provided this money with the explicit instruction that the Department faithfully support life-saving research to improve access and health outcomes for Americans. We did not appropriate these funds so that money could remain unspent while Americans suffer and our healthcare system struggles. AHRQ has saved our country billions of dollars in healthcare costs and improved patient safety. Abandoning this work is antithetical to the mission of the Department.

The agency's actions over the last year are an outrageous abuse of administrative power that will leave Americans sicker, poorer, and dying from preventable causes. Each of these canceled grants put real life patients further from the care that they need.

At a time when medical errors kill hundreds of thousands of Americans annually, when healthcare costs are crushing family budgets, and when we face unprecedented health challenges, your department has chosen to sabotage the very research designed to solve these problems. This is not leadership—this is sabotage of public health. And it must end, immediately.

We call upon you to take the following immediate actions:

1. Rescind all recent grant cancelations and restore full funding to all affected research projects;

² *STAT News*. “Federal health quality research grants worth \$109 million ended early.” July 22, 2026. <https://www.statnews.com/2026/07/22/ahrq-grants-health-quality-researchers-lose-109-million-funding/>

³ *Roll Call*. “‘Nobody answers’: The unraveling of a patient care research agency.” April 7, 2026. <https://rollcall.com/2026/04/07/nobody-answers-the-unraveling-of-a-patient-care-research-agency/>

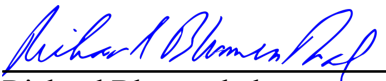
2. Ensure that AHRQ's full FY26 appropriation is obligated for health services research as the bipartisan majorities of Congress and President Trump's signature intended;
3. Provide a detailed explanation to Congress within one month of receiving this letter regarding the decision-making process that led to these cancelations, including any written criteria, instructions, funding plans, rankings, spreadsheets, analyses, or other documents used to identify or select affected grants;
4. Explain how the priorities identified in the non-continuation notice were applied to grants that were terminated and explain why grants focused on listed priority research areas were selected for non-continuation;
5. Provide to Congress a spend plan to ensure that the approximately \$200 million remaining in funding for extramural research grants are awarded before October 1, 2026, including any contract arrangements with other federal agencies and a description of how such contracts advance research on health care costs, quality, and outcomes;
6. Provide to Congress a detailed description of the number of employees at AHRQ that are performing grants-management functions, including issuing awards, processing continuations, and monitoring awards for compliance as of August 6, 2026, September 30, 2025, and January 1, 2025;
7. Provide a written assurance that such arbitrary cancelations will never happen again.

Countless researchers who have devoted their careers to improving healthcare for all of us have watched years of painstaking work and hundreds of millions of dollars in taxpayer investments destroyed overnight. The scientific and health pipelines that have been demolished will take decades to build back and may never be recovered.

The American people deserve a healthcare system informed by the best available evidence. They deserve research that makes their care safer, more effective, and more affordable. Congress has provided the resources to support this vital work. It is your responsibility to ensure these resources are used as intended.

We look forward to your response no later than August 25, 2026.

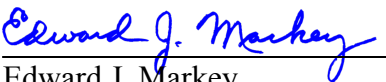
Sincerely,



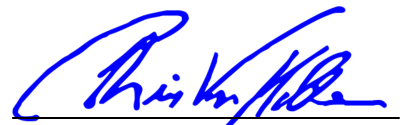
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Angela D. Alsobrooks
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



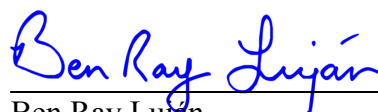
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



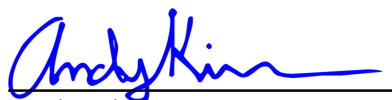
John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



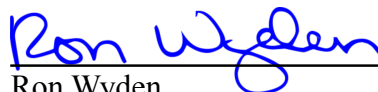
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



Andy Kim
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



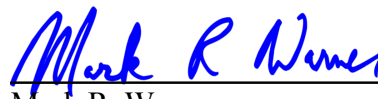
Elissa Slotkin
United States Senator



Jon Ossoff
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



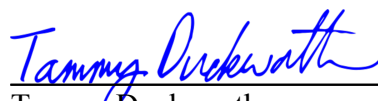
Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator