

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 6, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Kennedy:

As Members of Congress who support the 9-8-8 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, which is administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), we are concerned by the probationary firings and reductions in force (RIFs) that took place at the agency in February and March this year. Adequate staffing is essential to ensure that lifesaving resources, such as the 9-8-8 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, reach the communities that need them.

As you know, the 9-8-8 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline was created to fill the growing need for mental health, suicide, and substance use emotional support. Since its inception in July 2022, the 9-8-8 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline has received over 13 million calls, texts, and chats from people seeking support across the country – including 1.4 million from the Veteran's Crisis Line (VCL). Any further staffing and budget cuts at SAMHSA could affect or disrupt this vital service, potentially leading to an increase in hospitalizations, mental health issues and crises that will go unaddressed.

We are also alarmed by the Department's recently announced plans to merge SAMHSA and several agencies, including the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health (OASH), Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) and National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), into a new "Administration for a Healthy America" (AHA). As you know, SAMHSA's mission is to promote programs focused on mental health and substance use disorder services, which is different than the mission and work that is carried out by HRSA, OASH, ATSDR, and NIOSH. Your Department has stated that it will continue to look for ways to streamline its operations and agencies, however, it is unclear how the probationary firings, reductions in force and the consolidation of several agencies are meant to achieve this. We are strongly concerned that this proposed re-organization has not been well thought out and could negatively impact 9-8-8 and the millions of Americans that utilize it each year by eliminating SAMHSA.

To that end, we request responses to the following questions:

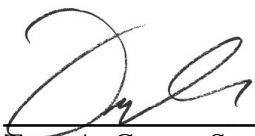
- How many employees supporting the 9-8-8 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline program at SAMHSA have been impacted by the Department's Reduction in Force (RIF)?
- What evidence is the Department using to base its decision to eliminate SAMHSA and thus deprioritize mental health and substance use services? If any analyses have been conducted on the rationale for these systemic changes, please share that information.

- What public health benefits are expected and what are the metrics you are putting in place to determine the success of the Department's re-organization?
- How does the Department plan to maintain the 9-8-8 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline's functions when SAMHSA is eliminated?

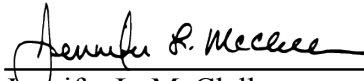
We strongly oppose any additional staffing and budget cuts and urge you to maintain and strengthen SAMHSA and the 9-8-8 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and request your prompt response to our concerns.

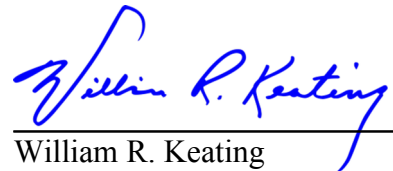
Sincerely,



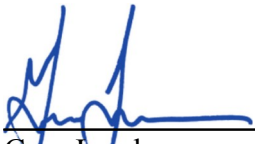
Troy A. Carter, Sr.
Member of Congress



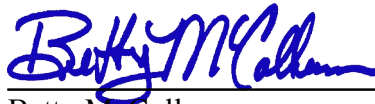
Jennifer L. McClellan
Member of Congress



William R. Keating
Member of Congress



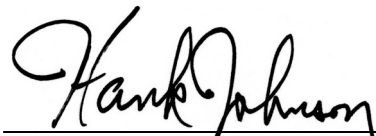
Greg Landsman
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



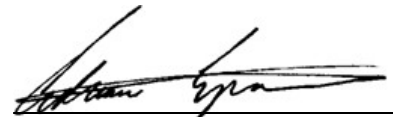
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



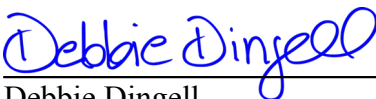
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Marc A. Veasey
Member of Congress



Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



Paul Tonko
Member of Congress



Doris Matsui
Member of Congress



Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



Bradley Scott Schneider
Member of Congress



Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



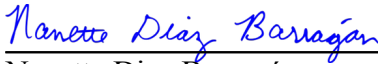
Shri Thanedar
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



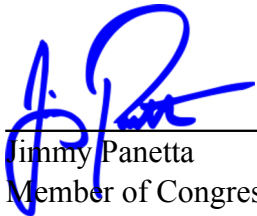
Kevin Mullin
Member of Congress



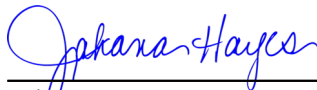
Marilyn Strickland
Member of Congress



André Carson
Member of Congress



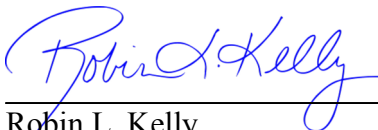
Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



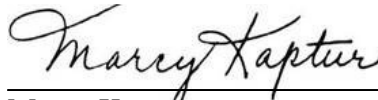
Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress



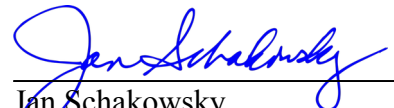
Mike Thompson
Member of Congress



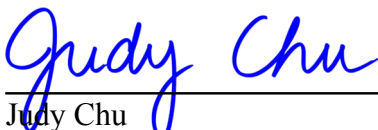
Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress



Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Judy Chu
Member of Congress



Kathy Castor
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress



Robert J. Menendez
Member of Congress