

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

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

May 19, 2025

Dear Secretary Kennedy,

We write to express our opposition to the abrupt termination of millions of dollars in critical public health grants to the Virginia Department of Health (VDH). As members of Congress from Virginia, we are deeply troubled by the ongoing impact on Virginians' health, jobs, and access to care across the Commonwealth. We strongly urge the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to honor its contract with VDH.

On Tuesday, March 25, HHS announced that it would cancel these grants to state and local public health funds.¹ HHS additionally notified VDH that several grants would be terminated early, despite the federal government's initial promise that those grants would remain active as late as July 2026. Additionally, VDH was notified that several CDC grants, with balances totaling over \$219 million, ended effective midnight March 24, 2025, despite being notified the following day. The press has also reported that HHS is withdrawing up to \$425 million in funding for Virginia.²

This left VDH offices scrambling: on March 26, local public health workers were laid off, locked out of the system, or sent home by grantee employers and organizations, leaving public health services for Virginians suddenly suspended. As of April, 13 full-time positions and 517 contract positions at VDH have been placed on hold or eliminated entirely.³

The Department's spokesperson called these grants a "waste [of] billions of taxpayer dollars."⁴ Respiratory illness remains a public health threat to many of the most vulnerable in our communities, including elders and the immunocompromised, with nearly 820 Virginians dying in 2024.⁵ Furthermore, these funds were also directed to improve bird flu and measles testing, bolster infectious disease surveillance, support substance use programs, and more. For example, one project funded by these grants was a mobile health clinic operated by the Rappahannock

¹ Moreno, Sabrina, "Scoop: Virginia health department faces layoffs after \$11.4B in federal cuts." *Axios Richmond*, March 26, 2025.

² McGibbon, Adrienne Hoar, and Mirshahi, Dean, "Sweeping COVID program cuts hit Virginia Department of Health." *VPM News*, March 26, 2025.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Zadrozny, Brandy, "CDC is pulling back \$11B in Covid funding sent to health departments across the U.S." *NBC News*, March 25, 2025.

⁵ "Respiratory Illness Dashboard." Virginia Department of Health.

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Area Health District, which would provide immunization services to difficult-to-reach and vulnerable populations in the Health District's service area. Rappahannock Area Health District also lost a key communications role, which served to inform residents of the availability of health care services. These losses are a microcosm of the major impacts that HHS' funding terminations have had on the Commonwealth.

Sudden mass firings place strains on Virginia's social services and interrupt health care access for many of the most vulnerable Virginians, including low-income families and seniors living in rural areas. VDH has done excellent work to continue to mitigate the risk of public health threats in the broader population; it should be allowed to scale this work back over an appropriate timeline and in accordance with the needs of the Commonwealth—not to push a political narrative. Keeping Virginians healthy is not a choice for policy makers, it is our obligation.

The public health workers who were paid through these grants deserve better than abruptly being fired. Virginians deserve better than having their health care services suddenly interrupted. We strongly urge the Department to resume these loans and to honor its existing contracts with VDH.

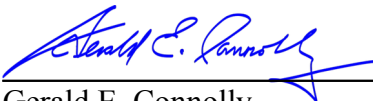
Sincerely,



Eugene Simon Vindman
Member of Congress



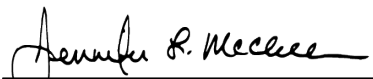
Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Jennifer L. McClellan
Member of Congress

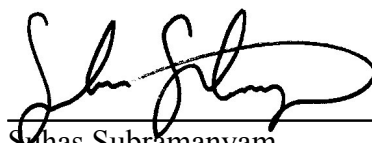


Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress

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Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress