

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-3641
Minority (202) 225-2927

June 10, 2025

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

The Honorable Jayanta Bhattacharya, M.D., Ph.D.
Director
National Institutes of Health
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Secretary Kennedy and Director Bhattacharya:

Yesterday, we received a letter signed by 342 National Institutes of Health (NIH) staff detailing unprecedented waste, abuse, and illegality at NIH. The letter also addresses the harmful consequences of these unprecedented actions on patients, NIH staff, research conducted at NIH, and America's ability to improve and save lives through scientific breakthroughs.¹ These courageous staff confirm our concerns with the numerous, senseless cuts and arbitrary changes that you and others in the Trump Administration have made at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and NIH.

As the letter notes, Director Bhattacharya has repeatedly emphasized the importance of dissent and open scientific debate. We hope that this provides an opportunity to prove that this commitment to dissent is not just empty words. Director Bhattacharya's initial response that "respectful dissent in science is productive" is a promising start, and we hope that this remains the position of HHS and NIH.²

We also write to remind you that any attempt by HHS, NIH, or any other federal entity to retaliate against any of the letter's signatories would be illegal. The Whistleblower Protection

¹ Stand Up for Science, *The Bethesda Declaration: A Call for NIH and HHS Leadership to Deliver on Promises of Academic Freedom and Scientific Excellence* (<https://www.standupforscience.net/bethesda-declaration>) (accessed June 9, 2025).

² *Trump Administration Live Updates: National Institutes of Health Workers Denounce 'Harmful' Policies*, The New York Times (June 9, 2025).

Act protects individuals like the signers of the Bethesda Declaration who provide information to Congress and others about gross mismanagement, gross waste of federal funds, abuse of authority, and danger to public health and safety.³ Among other serious concerns, the letter describes instances where countless decades of scientific expertise is being lost by arbitrary cuts in a demonstration of gross mismanagement, federal dollars are being wasted by reckless cancellation of potentially life-saving research before it is completed, funding for critical collaboration with outside partners has been arbitrarily capped, and patients' lives are being put at risk by arbitrary and abrupt termination of clinical trials. It is clear from the letter and statements from signatories that they believe these actions to be gravely concerning at best and illegal at worst.⁴ We agree.

The letter also states that the signatories have appealed to NIH leadership repeatedly without HHS or NIH leadership taking any corrective action. We hope that you will finally listen to the voices of those who have invested their expertise and, for some, much of their professional lives into making NIH the world-leading biomedical research institution that it is. It is crucial that you address the harms outlined in the letter and stop undermining the life-saving research taking place at NIH and at research institutions across the world.

We request that you provide your assurances in writing that neither you nor anyone at HHS or NIH will engage in any retaliatory action against these whistleblowers for their protected disclosures to Congress and the American public.

³ 5 U.S.C. § 2302(a)(2)(D).

⁴ See note 2.

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We will be watching your actions closely and welcome any staff who feel that they have been retaliated against to contact Democratic Committee staff at (202) 225-2927 or ECDemTips@mail.house.gov.

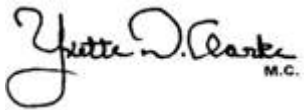
Sincerely,



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Ranking Member



Diana DeGette
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Health



Yvette D. Clarke
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight
and Investigations

cc: The Honorable Brett Guthrie
Chairman

The Honorable Earl “Buddy” Carter
Chairman
Subcommittee on Health

The Honorable Gary Palmer
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations