

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 24, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Kennedy:

We write to share our grave concern about the recent and unacceptable personnel cuts to the World Trade Center Health Program (WTCHP). While more than 23 years have passed since the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, over 137,000 9/11 survivors and first responders continue to deal with health conditions resulting from the attacks.¹ It is critical for these survivors and first responders to continue to have access to the WTCHP's high quality and affordable healthcare without delay. Therefore, we urge you to reverse the rash staffing terminations to the WTCHP and restore all related grant funding and research immediately.

In 2011, Congress passed the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act with strong bipartisan support, establishing the WTCHP. The WTCHP provides essential medical monitoring and treatment to over 137,000 responders and survivors from the World Trade Center and lower Manhattan, the Pentagon, and the Shanksville crash site. These survivors and first responders live in every State and all but one congressional district.

We are deeply concerned to learn that the Trump administration has slashed the WTCHP's staff through termination of probationary employees combined with the Administration's buyout program.² Last year, the WTCHP was authorized to increase staff count to 138 to handle 10,000 additional enrollments in the program.³ With the Trump administration's cuts, the program now has just 73 staff members. These staffing cuts will lead to additional delays in the program, and as one former WTCHP employee said, "for some of these members these delays are going to be life and death."⁴

¹ 9.11 World Trade Center Health Program. "Program Statistics." December 31, 2024.
<https://www.cdc.gov/wtc/ataglance.html>

² Chevat, Benjamin. "Statement from Citizens for the Extension of the James Zadroga Act on the Trump Administration Cutting 20% of the CDC Staff who work at the World Trade Center Health Program and other Actions Impacting 9/11 Responders and Survivors." *Citizens for the Extension of the James Zadroga Act*, February 16, 2025. <https://www.renew911health.org/press-statement/statement-from-citizens-for-the-extension-of-the-james-zadroga-act-on-the-trump-administration-cutting-20-of-the-cdc-staff-who-work-at-the-world-trade-center-health-program-and-other-actions-impacting/>

³ 9.11 World Trade Center Health Program. "Program Statistics." December 31, 2024.
<https://www.cdc.gov/wtc/ataglance.html>

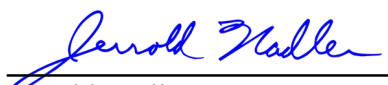
⁴ Cutler, Nancy. "9/11 health program cuts to cause 'life and death' delays, fired worker says." *USA Today*, February 18, 2025. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2025/02/18/trump-musk-doge-911-responders->

These staffing cuts are compounded by the Trump administration's freezing, rescission, and slashing of certain federal grants. This past week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) terminated a grant that funded research comparing the New York City Fire Department disease incidence rate to other urban fire departments. In the termination notice, the CDC deemed the research "non-essential."⁵ Terminating this grant would hinder research that informs what conditions should be added to the WTCHP's covered conditions. We are cautiously optimistic about reports that this grant funding has been restored, although we have not received confirmation from the administration. Additionally, the State University of New York recently announced that the Trump administration's proposed indirect cost cuts to NIH grants could imperil their work to treat thousands of 9/11 first responders.⁶

In establishing the WTCHP, the United States government made a promise to take care of the 9/11 survivors and brave first responders who risked their lives for this nation. It is apparent that President Trump and Elon Musk have no intention to honor that promise. In December, Elon Musk single-handedly tanked a bipartisan deal to make the WTCHP soluble through at least 2040.⁷ Now, President Trump and Elon Musk are attempting to dismantle what's left of the WTCHP through staff terminations and grant rescissions.

We urge you to promptly rehire the terminated probationary staff, replace all positions where staff have taken buyout offers, and allow all research grants to continue, so that 9/11 first responders and survivors can get the health care they need and deserve without any delay.

Sincerely,



Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



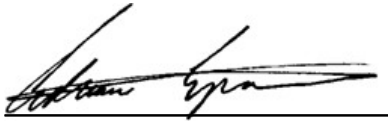
Dan Goldman
Member of Congress

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⁵ Chevat, Benjamin. "Statement from Citizens for the Extension of the James Zadroga Act on the Trump Administration Cutting 20% of the CDC Staff who work at the World Trade Center Health Program and other Actions Impacting 9/11 Responders and Survivors." *Citizens for the Extension of the James Zadroga Act*, February 16, 2025. <https://www.renew911health.org/press-statement/statement-from-citizens-for-the-extension-of-the-james-zadroga-act-on-the-trump-administration-cutting-20-of-the-cdc-staff-who-work-at-the-world-trade-center-health-program-and-other-actions-impacting/>

⁶ The State University of New York. "Fact Sheet: Life-Saving SUNY Research At Risk From Surprise NIH Budget Cuts." February 2025. https://www.suny.edu/media/suny/content-assets/documents/govt-relations/federal/NIH_Fact-Sheet.pdf

⁷ Friedman, Lisa and Maggie Haberman. "Money for 9/11 Health Care Was Dropped from Year-End Spending Bill." *The New York Times*. December 23, 2024. <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/12/23/us/politics/sept-11-health-care-spending-bill.html>



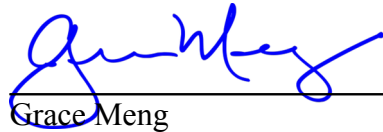
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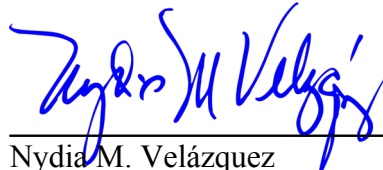
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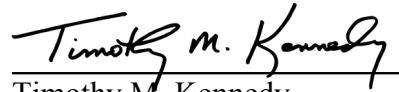
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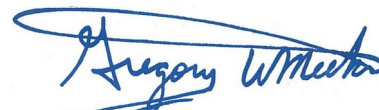
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