

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 4, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Kennedy:

As you begin your appointment as the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), news continues to come out about staff and budget cuts across HHS. We are writing to you to express our serious concerns about these cuts, specifically as they relate to programs that support survivors of domestic and sexual violence and their families.

The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) program, under the HHS Administration for Children and Families (ACF), is the only federal funding source dedicated to domestic violence and sexual assault shelters and programs and is the cornerstone of our nation's efforts to address domestic and sexual violence. It supports lifesaving services including emergency shelters, counseling, and crisis hotlines- including the National Domestic Violence Hotline, which has provided comprehensive, often lifesaving support for over 7 million contacts. There are approximately 2,000 FVPSA-funded community-based domestic violence programs and over 240 tribes and tribal organizations for victims and their children. FVPSA also supports a children's services program that allows communities to receive targeted training and funding to meet the specific and unique needs of children coping with the impacts of domestic violence.

On March 31st, Shawndell Dawson, the Director of the Office of Family Violence Prevention and Services (OFVPS), responsible for administering FVPSA, was placed on administrative leave, leaving OFVPS without the leadership and expertise of someone with more than 28 years of experience in supporting survivors and their families. OFVPS plays a unique role in domestic and sexual violence response and prevention, and requires an office dedicated solely to this unique role, led by someone with appropriate expertise. **We request your swift response to explain the grounds for this action, and what your plan is to reinstate Director Dawson and limit the negative impact on the Office's ability to administer FVPSA. We would also like to request a meeting with Katherine Chon, who is currently overseeing the OFVPS.**

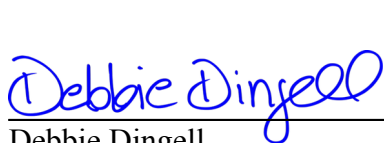
In addition, we would like to reiterate the importance of following Congressional intent as it relates to implementation of H.R. 1968, the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025. This includes program specific funding levels included in the FY24 Legislative Text and Explanatory Statement (H. Comm. Print 55-008) for all programs funded out of the Office of

Family Violence Prevention and Services. This includes funding for domestic violence and sexual assault programs across the country, the National Domestic Violence Hotline, resource centers, as well as discretionary grant programs. All are critically important to ensure services and support for survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

We are also concerned over reports that thousands of federal employees at the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) were subject to a reduction in force, including those in the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. The Injury Center administers the Rape Prevention and Education (RPE) and the Domestic Violence Prevention Enhancement and Leadership Through Alliance (DELTA) grants, which are the only federal funds dedicated to the primary prevention of domestic and sexual based violence. The center also administers the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, which collects comprehensive data that informs both public health response and violence prevention efforts. These critical programs are evidence based, successful, and require adequate staffing at the CDC to help local grantees to implement their work. **We ask that you immediately rescind the reduction in force for these important initiatives, and explain how you will ensure that these programs continue to operate effectively. We would also like to request the contact information for the official who is currently overseeing the CDC Injury Center.**

These vital, often life-saving programs need adequate staffing and capacity to serve those who depend on them to heal and move forward. Domestic and sexual violence can happen to anyone, anywhere, at any time and it is critical we have programs in place to serve survivors in the short- and long-term. These programs support not only survivors and their families but also bolster the health and safety of our communities. We are worried that these large-scale staff reductions will undermine our nation's public health response to domestic and sexual violence. **Please get back to us at your soonest convenience, but no later than April 30, 2025.**

Sincerely,



Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress



Gwen S. Moore  
Member of Congress



Lucy McBath  
Member of Congress