Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 23, 2025

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chairman, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As you and your colleagues begin work on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, we urge you to recognize the important role CDC plays in protecting public health and, in particular, its work to reduce death and disease caused by tobacco. While the Department of Health and Human Services' recently announced reorganization would eliminate CDC's Office on Smoking and Health (OSH), Congress has the authority to determine which programs are funded and at what level. To effectively protect youth from e-cigarettes and other tobacco products and to help current tobacco users to quit, CDC's OSH should be funded at $310 million.

We are deeply concerned by the Department of Health and Human Services' recent decision to lay off the entire staff at CDC's OSH. The elimination of this office will worsen public health, lead to more people dying from our nation's leading preventable cause of death, and require our government to spend increased taxpayer dollars treating tobacco-related illnesses and diseases. As Members of Congress, it is paramount that we exercise our responsibility to determine how federal resources are spent and to ensure that appropriated funds are spent as directed.

Tobacco use is a key risk factor for many chronic diseases in our nation. Tobacco use kills nearly 500,000 Americans each year, and more than 20 million Americans have died as a result of smoking over the past 50 years. More than 16 million Americans currently live with tobacco-related diseases, including cancer, heart disease, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. In addition to this enormous toll on health, tobacco use also inflicts substantial economic harm. Tobacco use is responsible for an estimated $241 billion in annual health care costs. The majority of these expenses are paid for by government programs like Medicare and Medicaid.

CDC needs continued resources to effectively reduce youth e-cigarette use, expand their media campaign that has proven highly effective in helping adult smokers to quit, and increase efforts to assist populations most at risk of harm from tobacco products. In 2024, more than 1.6 million high school and middle school students were current e-cigarette users. Of great concern, over 40 percent of high school e-cigarette users reported frequent use (at least 20 days a month), which is a troubling sign that kids are becoming addicted. Youth use of e-cigarettes and other new tobacco products could threaten the significant progress that has been made in reducing youth tobacco use.

In addition, adult tobacco users can and want to quit. CDC's Tips from Former Smokers (Tips) media campaign has proven to be highly successful and cost effective, but it is on the air for only part of each year. The Tips campaign depicts former smokers coping with the devastating diseases and disabilities caused by tobacco use and informs viewers how they can obtain evidence-based services to help them quit. Between 2012 and 2018, the campaign helped more than 16.4 million smokers make a quit attempt and resulted in approximately one million smokers successfully quitting. During this period, the campaign helped to save an estimated $7.3 billion

in smoking-related health care costs. Eliminating OSH funding would terminate this campaign entirely and likely lead to fewer quitters in future years.

While our nation's smoking rate has decreased in recent decades, reductions in smoking have been uneven. Certain populations and regions of the country continue to use tobacco products at much higher rates than the national rate. For example, states in the Midwest and South have higher smoking rates than states in the Northeast and West. Americans who live in rural areas have some of the highest smoking rates in the country. These differences have real-life impacts, as states with the highest smoking rates have a far greater number of cancer deaths attributed to smoking than states with the lowest smoking rates. New efforts are needed to reduce tobacco use where the rates of tobacco use and tobacco-caused disease are highest.

The elimination of OSH funding would particularly impact states with already inadequate levels of funding on tobacco prevention programs. Currently, 13 states would lose at least 30 percent of their total funding for tobacco control programs if OSH was eliminated. Five states and two territorial health programs received at least 75 percent of their state quitline funding from CDC in FY 2024 and likely would be unable to continue operating their quitlines if OSH funding were eliminated. Many other state quitlines would need to reduce the services they offer, leading to fewer tobacco users quitting and more preventable tobacco-related deaths.

Given tobacco's significant burden on health, it is critical to enable the agency to more effectively address the pressing challenges posed by youth e-cigarette use and the death and disease caused by tobacco. Funding is vital for CDC tobacco prevention and cessation programs and will help free future generations from tobacco's devastating impact.

Sincerely,

Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress

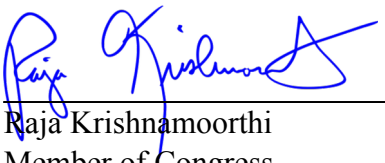
Brian K. Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

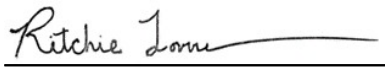
Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



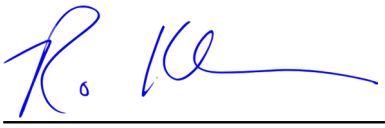
Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress



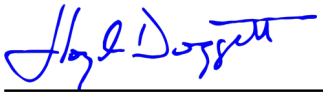
Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



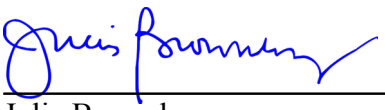
Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress



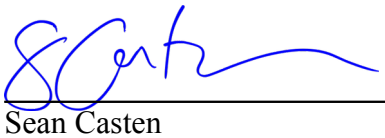
Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



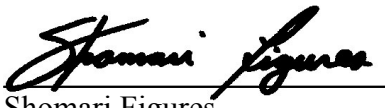
Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



Sean Casten
Member of Congress



Shomari Figures
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
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Val Hoyle
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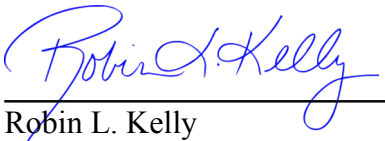
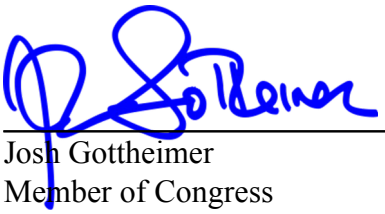
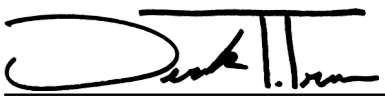


Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress



Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress



Derek T. Tran
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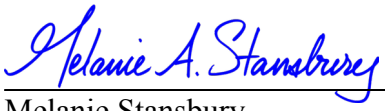

Melanie Stansbury
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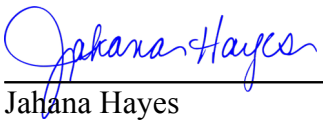

Jahana Hayes
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Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



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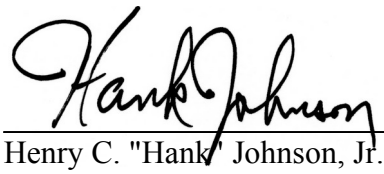
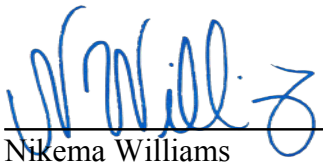
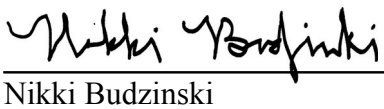
Member of Congress



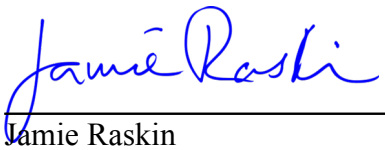
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Nikema Williams
Member of Congress



Nikki Budzinski
Member of Congress



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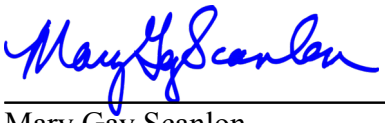
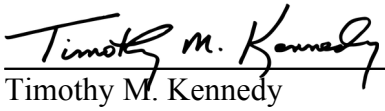


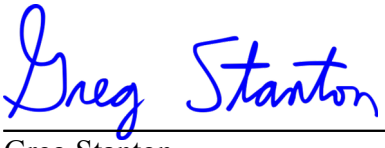
Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress



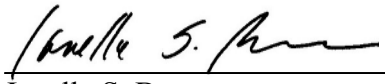
Emilia Strong Sykes
Member of Congress



Timothy M. Kennedy
Member of Congress



Greg Stanton
Member of Congress



Janelle S. Bynum
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Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



Jill Tokuda
Member of Congress



Marilyn Strickland
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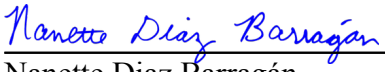
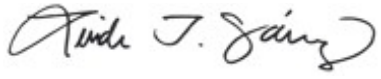


Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



Linda T. Sánchez
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John Garamendi
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Summer L. Lee
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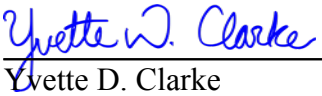
MARK TAKANO
Member of Congress



Yvette D. Clarke
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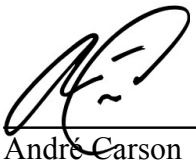
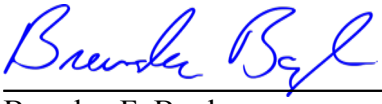


André Carson
Member of Congress



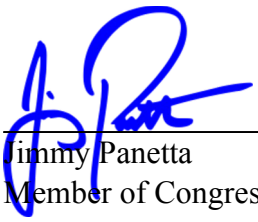
Al Green
Member of Congress



Brendan F. Boyle
Member of Congress



Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress



Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



Eric Sorensen
Member of Congress



Mikie Sherrill
Member of Congress



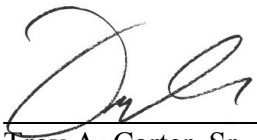
Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress



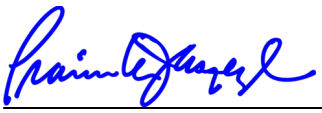
Darren Soto
Member of Congress



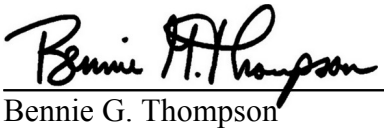
Lucy McBath
Member of Congress



Troy A. Carter, Sr.
Member of Congress



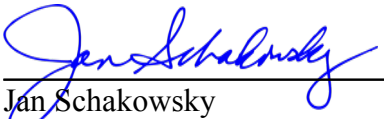
Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress



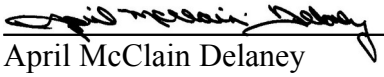
Chris Pappas
Member of Congress



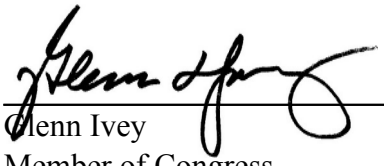
Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



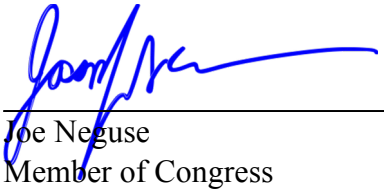
Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



April McClain Delaney
Member of Congress



Glenn Ivey
Member of Congress



Joe Neguse
Member of Congress