

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 10, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Kennedy:

We write today to express our dismay at recent news reports indicating that the World Trade Center Health Program (WTCHP), administered by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), has halted the process mandated under the Zadroga statute to consider whether to add new conditions to the list covered by the program. It is our understanding that in December 2024 the WTCHP announced that by March 2025 decisions would be made on the inclusion of certain autoimmune, cardiac, and cognitive conditions, but this did not occur. This delay in recognizing new health conditions tied to exposures received at Ground Zero, at Shanksville, and at the Pentagon harms the ability of the first responders who heroically responded to 9/11 to get the health care they need and are entitled to under the WTCHP.

We have previously called attention to the unnecessary pause in certifying the covered conditions for enrolled members, which was originally tied to your indiscriminate firings of WTCHP staff, including the termination of Dr. John Howard, the NIOSH Director and WTCHP Administrator. After several Members of Congress pressed for the reinstatement of WTCHP staff necessary for the program's functioning, including Dr. Howard, we understood the issue to be resolved, based on your personal commitment to us. Thus, we are extremely concerned by new reports that there have been no further action on petitions to the program to add health conditions under the WTCHP.

This delay in the core work of the WTCHP also calls into question whether there are other elements of the program that are not being completed, such as enrolling newly-eligible members, conducting surveillance and research to support the addition of new health conditions, and public communication around this work. Dismantling the work of WTCHP puts heroic 9/11 responders' lives at risk.

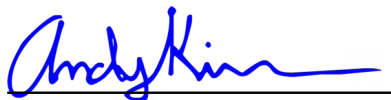
In light of the anniversary of 9/11 this week, we request a timely congressional briefing by HHS, as well as a written response to the below questions by October 10, 2025:

1. How many full-time employees, term or temporary employees, and contractors did the program have on January 20, 2025?
2. How many NIOSH staff remain at the WTCHP as of today?
3. How many new members have been enrolled in the program since January 20, 2025?
 - a. How does this enrollment rate compare to past years?

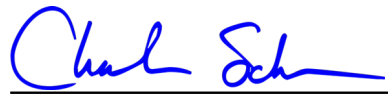
- b. How many applications for enrollment in the program are pending as of September 10, 2025?
4. How many certifications of covered conditions has the program completed since January 20, 2025? How does this certification rate compare to the same period in 2024?
 - a. How are you communicating to petitioners about the status and results of their petitions?
5. We understand the WTCHP was going to announce by March 2025 a decision on the potential inclusion of certain autoimmune, cardiac, and cognitive health conditions to be covered by the program. Please describe what, if anything, the program is doing on these ongoing surveillance and research efforts and what has been communicated to the responders and survivors who have these conditions.
6. Please describe ongoing surveillance and research efforts for medical conditions related to 9/11.
7. There have been press reports that the “communications pause” imposed on the program since January 22, 2025, is now a “temporary hiatus”. What is the difference and when will this ban end?

If you or your staff have any questions about this request, or to schedule the briefing, please contact [REDACTED] We look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



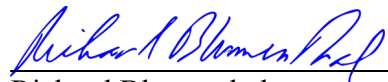
Andy Kim
United States Senator



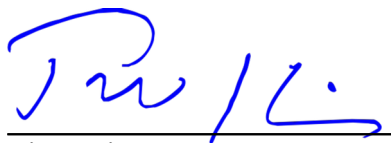
Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



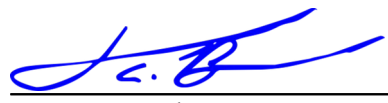
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



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