

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 11, 2025

The Honorable James O'Neill
Acting Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
200 Independence Avenue S.W.
Washington, D.C., 20201

Acting Director O'Neill,

We write to express deep concern over disturbing reports that the Trump administration is allowing the appointments of health scientists and public health experts hired under the Title 42 Service Fellowship Authority (42 U.S.C § 209 (g)) and other term appointments at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), who have reached their renewal dates, to expire without extending their appointments. This action is one of several in direct conflict with Secretary Kennedy's May 14, 2025 testimony before the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, in which he stated, "we have not fired any working scientists... our policy was to make sure none of them were lost and that that research continues."¹ Letting these Title 42 service fellowship and term appointments lapse effectively terminates these scientists and public health experts and is counterproductive and harmful to the CDC's critical public health mission. As the new Acting Director of CDC, we urge you to reverse any plans to allow these appointments to expire and request answers to questions regarding your plans.

Under Secretary Kennedy's leadership, the Department of Health and Human Services has overseen the mass dismissal of CDC personnel—actions that have been deeply damaging to the agency's ability to fulfil its mission. We have seen evidence of employees being hastily recalled after their absence disrupted critical operations, raising serious questions about the planning and oversight of this process. To date, there has been no clear public accounting of how many staff were let go, how many were reinstated, or how many highly specialized researchers were terminated. The lack of transparency suggests that the scope of these layoffs is far greater than the administration has publicly acknowledged—and that the consequences for our nation's public health infrastructure will be severe.

The Title 42 Service Fellowship Authority (42 U.S.C § 209 (g)) allows CDC to hire "physicians, industrial hygienists, epidemiologists, health scientists, engineers, and data experts who provide the evidence that public health decisions are built on."² Title 42 service fellows include highly skilled scientists with exceptional subject-matter expertise in cutting-edge public health areas who fill key technical gaps.³

Failure to renew Title 42 service fellows and term employee appointments at CDC has already led to the disruption of critical ongoing public health research and disease surveillance and the inability of CDC to retain and recruit the next generation of public health scientists from its public health training programs. By letting Title

¹ *Hearing on Fiscal Year 2026 Department of Health and Human Services Budget*, U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions (May 14, 2025), <https://www.help.senate.gov/hearings/hearing-on-fiscal-year-2026-department-of-health-and-human-services-budget>

² *Highly Skilled CDC Scientists Are Quietly Being Pushed Out*, AFGE Local 2883 (Jul. 3, 2025), <https://www.afge2883ga.org/post/highly-skilled-cdc-scientists-are-quietly-being-pushed-out>

³ *Evaluating Title 42 Program Implementation. Enhancing EPA Science Capability for a Complex Future: Recommendation for Use of Title 42 Special Hiring Authority*, National Academy of Sciences (2024), <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/read/27440/chapter/4>

42 service fellowship and term employee appointments expire or not allowing extensions to their renewal dates, this administration is facilitating the complete erosion of scientific expertise, institutional knowledge, and public health preparedness at the CDC. This damage will take decades to reverse.

Due to the urgency of this issue, we request a response to the following questions by September 30, 2025:

1. Since January 21, 2025, how many Title 42 service fellowships at CDC lapsed after meeting the Not-To-Exceed (NTE) date? Please list the Centers and divisions at CDC that were affected.
2. Since January 21, 2025, how many Title 42 service fellowships at CDC were terminated before the NTE date? Please list the Centers and divisions at CDC that were affected.
3. Since January 21, 2025, how many Title 42 service fellowships at CDC have been renewed? Please list the Centers and divisions at CDC where these fellows are placed.
4. Since January 21, 2025, how many Title 42 service fellowships expired despite being recommended for renewal by CDC leadership? Please list the Centers and divisions at CDC that were affected.
5. As of September 1, 2025, how many staff are employed at CDC?
6. As of September 1, 2025, how many Title 42 service fellows worked at CDC?
7. Since January 21, 2025, how many term and/or temporary employee appointments lapsed before their NTE date? Please list the Centers and divisions at CDC that were affected.
8. Since January 21, 2025, how many term and/or temporary employee appointments have been subjected to reductions in force? Please list the Centers and divisions at CDC that were affected.
 - a. Of these, how many have been separated? Please list the Centers and divisions at CDC that were affected.
9. Since January 21, 2025, how many term and/or temporary appointments at CDC were terminated before the NTE date? Please list the Centers and divisions at CDC that were affected.
10. Since January 21, 2025, how many term and/or temporary employee appointments expired despite being recommended for renewal by CDC leadership? Please list the Centers and divisions at CDC that were affected.
11. As of September 1, 2025, how many term and/or temporary full time employment (FTE) appointments are there at CDC?
12. How do you plan to manage grants, contracts, and cooperative agreement funds, as required by law, when employees who oversee these funds are let go?

In keeping in line with Secretary Kennedy's commitment to radical transparency, we look forward to receiving answers to the above questions by the requested date.

Sincerely,



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



Jon Ossoff
United States Senator