

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 you on behalf of the employees of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)—dedicated and patriotic Georgians and our constituents—who are still reeling from a horrific attack reportedly motivated by extremist anti-vaccine ideology that occurred at the Atlanta campus on August 8, 2025. Weeks later, the CDC was plunged further into chaos with the abrupt firing of recently confirmed Director Dr. Susan Monarez and the mass resignation of senior officials objecting to Secretary Kennedy's dangerous mismanagement. In the aftermath of the August 8th attack, and amidst continued chaos and plummeting morale at this key public health agency, you must take immediate action to ensure a safe and secure environment for the CDC workforce and the highly sensitive facilities they operate.

On the afternoon of Friday, August 8, 2025, a gunman fired over 500 rounds at CDC Headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia, targeting multiple buildings on the Clifton campus, including buildings near the CDC's day care. The gunman tragically killed DeKalb County Police Officer David Rose, who bravely responded to the shooting. Many other law enforcement officials from multiple jurisdictions also rushed to respond to the shooting, placing themselves in harm's way to neutralize the threat and eventually secure the premises.

Images taken after the attack show hundreds of bullet holes in the windows of at least four CDC buildings, an eerie reminder of how close these dedicated public servants were to harm's way. Public health workers at CDC wake up every day to protect us from unseen threats. They deserve to be and feel safe at their job.

Following the shooting, former Director Monarez addressed CDC staff, in which she warned of “the dangers of misinformation and its promulgation.”¹ On August 25, 2025, Secretary Kennedy reportedly summoned Monarez to his office in Washington for a meeting, where he gave her an ultimatum: follow his orders that prioritized his extreme ideology over science or resign. On September 4, 2025, Secretary Kennedy testified before the Senate Finance Committee that you were present for this meeting, during which Secretary Kennedy also reportedly denigrated CDC employees, and, according to his own September 4 testimony before the Senate Finance Committee, called the agency “the most corrupt agency at HHS, and maybe the government.”²

¹ Mary Kekatos, *CDC Director says misinformation 'led to deadly consequences' in campus shooting*, ABC News (Aug. 12, 2025), <https://abcnews.go.com/US/suspected-gunman-cdc-shooting-fired-500-rounds-officials/story?id=124577732>

² Kaia Hubbard and Kathryn Watson, *RFK Jr. faces heated questions on CDC turmoil, vaccine changes at Senate hearing*, CBS News (Sep. 4, 2025), <https://www.cbsnews.com/live-updates/rfk-hearing-senate-finance-committee-cdc-vaccines/>

Before this meeting, on August 20, 2025, more than 750 current and former staff from your agency wrote a letter to Secretary Kennedy outlining their concerns about their safety and stability as an agency.³ In light of the critical mission of the CDC, the August of turbulent upheaval for the agency, and the essential role played by CDC workers, we echo the calls from hundreds of CDC staff who ask for more accountability from you and urge you to take the following steps immediately, and *before* you require CDC staff to return in-person to its Atlanta campus:

1. Conduct and report to Congress in writing a thorough analysis of HHS and CDC's security protocols to examine any security vulnerabilities that contributed to this attack, assess any gaps or weaknesses in current security protocols and response procedures, identify any campus or facilities security deficiencies, and evaluate timely notification to employees in the case of a future security event.
2. Ensure that CDC employees, their families, and any other individuals affected by the attack have access to free trauma support and adequate mental health resources, as well as flexible remote work options where appropriate.
3. Submit to Congress an emergency supplemental funding request for any emergency funding necessary to scale up both these physical security improvements and mental health services based on your assessment of CDC safety and employee support needs described above, with an emphasis on meeting the increased security and mental health needs amid increased and politically-motivated threats to agency staff.
4. Work with relevant agencies, including the Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigations, to:
 - a. Remove online material that targets or threatens the CDC federal workforce and establish additional security protocols to protect individuals targeted through these dangerous online watch lists.
 - b. Investigate the role that misinformation and disinformation about the CDC, its work, or its workers, including the role that any disinformation or misinformation from any Administration officials, including Secretary Kennedy, had in contributing to the volatile atmosphere before this attack.
 - c. Issue recommendations for countering CDC misinformation, CDC disinformation, and threats to the federal public health workforce.
5. Pause any terminations or restructuring of CDC divisions and staff for the remainder of the calendar year and until all investigations and analyses of this incident are complete and reported to Congress, and until all security reforms have been fully implemented.

³ *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) Workers' Response to the August 8th Attack*, (Aug. 20, 2025), <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/689f5612fc63c95dc6488b44/t/68a5cd5c466e07715e95b092/1755696476818/CDC+Reponse+Letter+Final.pdf>

6. Collaborate with the local CDC union, American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) Local 2883, including by holding a town hall with members within one month, and assigning a member of HHS leadership as the primary point of contact for AFGE Local 2883 to discuss and monitor employee well-being following this horrific attack.

These steps are critical to ensure the longevity of the CDC and its work, which has spanned 80 years and 14 presidential administrations of both parties. The CDC has a long history of intervening in public health threats, from eradicating smallpox to reducing smoking rates in the U.S., lowering rates of chronic and infectious diseases.⁴

The CDC also played a critical role in President Trump's Operation Warp Speed, which President Trump has correctly noted saved "tens of millions of lives" during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁵ By contrast, Secretary Kennedy has denigrated the COVID-19 vaccine spurred by Operation Warp Speed as the "deadliest vaccine ever made," undermining President Trump's signature accomplishment.⁶ Now, as Acting Director of CDC, you must be an advocate for this important public health agency and its workers, uplifting science and evidence amidst the Secretary's hostility.

The Georgians who work at the CDC and other federal and state public health agencies serve our nation with honor and protect us from public health threats every day. Their quiet and thankless work saves countless lives. They should not face threats or violence for carrying out their professional duties to the American people. Yet, under this administration, the CDC community has experienced incredible turmoil, unjust layoffs and illegal firings, purging of the agency's leadership and top immunization expertise, hostility from the highest voices of this Administration and the Secretary of HHS, and constant political attacks, culminating in the violence of August 8. The nation's premier public health agency deserves more.

We look forward to seeing you take the above-mentioned actions, as well as any additional actions to support CDC workers. Please provide a briefing on your progress by September 25, 2025.

Sincerely,



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



Jon Ossoff
United States Senator

⁴ CDC: *Adult smoking hits 60-year low*, American Hospital Association (Mar. 6, 2025), <https://www.aha.org/news/headline/2025-03-06-cdc-adult-smoking-hits-60-year-low>

⁵ Seung Min Kim, *Operation Warp Speed was one of Trump's biggest achievements. Then came RFK Jr. and vaccine skeptics*, ABC News (Sep. 5, 2025), <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory/operation-warp-speed-trumps-biggest-achievements-rfk-jr-125280158>

⁶ Jessica McDonald and Catalina Jaramillo, *FactChecking RFK Jr.'s Other Health Claims During HHS Confirmation Hearings*, FactCheck.Org (Feb. 6, 2025), <https://www.factcheck.org/2025/02/factchecking-rfk-jr-s-other-health-claims-during-hhs-confirmation-hearings/>