United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 25, 2026

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy
Secretary
The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Kennedy,

We are writing to express our concern regarding the recent cancelation of Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) grants and the impact on Pennsylvania's research institutions and their efforts to improve health care outcomes for the patients they serve.

On July 15, 2026, more than 150 AHRQ grantees, including researchers at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) and the University of Pittsburgh, were notified of the cancelation of funding for ongoing, multi-year research projects. These cancelations are affecting awards that have undergone peer review and have received prior-year funding. Abruptly ending these multi-year projects, after substantial federal investment, risks wasting taxpayer resources while disrupting research, eliminating jobs, and delaying innovations to improve patient care.

While we appreciate the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) commitment to ensuring federally funded research promotes scientific rigor and delivers meaningful value for taxpayers, we believe these objectives should be balanced with consideration of projects that have already undergone review and received federal funding. Careful stewardship of federal research spending is important to maintaining public trust in our nation's research enterprise.

As the Department implements these reforms, it is imperative that changes are carried out in a manner that preserves the value of existing federal investments. To that end, the recent decision to end continuation funding for ongoing AHRQ grants may create uncertainty around federal research support, making it harder for institutions to plan long-term projects, retain experienced researchers, and pursue future scientific breakthroughs. Over time, this instability risks weakening our nation's leadership in scientific research.

To better understand the Departments perspective, planning, and prioritization, we respectfully request that HHS provide a briefing on the Department's approach to these funding decisions, no later than September 25, 2026, with topics to include:

1. The criteria utilized by Department to determine which AHRQ grants were canceled and which will continue;
2. How the Department considers prior federal investment, project progress, and potential disruptions to research and personnel when making these decisions;

3. Whether affected institutions have opportunities to seek reconsideration or otherwise mitigate the impact of terminated funding;
4. Department plans to reallocate funds that otherwise would have supported the affected grants; and
5. The Department's long-term plan for AHRQ and the role it plays in supporting research that promotes safe, effective, and affordable healthcare for the American people.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter, and we look forward to learning more about the perspectives and priorities of the Department and working together to ensure our nation's research enterprise remains strong and effective.

Sincerely,

David H. McCormick
United States Senator

John Fetterman
United States Senator