

The Disability and Aging Collaborative

March 28, 2025

Secretary Robert Kennedy
The US Department of Health & Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

RE: HHS Announcement on Restructuring Key Agencies

The undersigned members of the Disability and Aging Collaborative (DAC) write with extreme concern about the announcement yesterday from Secretary Robert Kennedy about the destruction of several vital agencies that support aging adults, disabled people of all ages, caregivers, and care workers. The DAC is a coalition of organizations that work together to advance long-term services and support policy at the federal level. Formed in 2009, the DAC was one of the first coordinated efforts to bring together disability, aging, and labor organizations.

On behalf of the constituencies that we represent, DAC organizational members are deeply troubled by the announcement from HHS that it intends to split the important work of the Administration for Community Living (ACL) across several other agencies, cutting staff and diluting critical programs, and impacting other programs across HHS--such as programs within NIH, HRSA, and CDC that impact people with disabilities--that will be further pushed to the sidelines.

The ACL administers programs, research, and services that are vital to the health and wellbeing of older adults and people with disabilities. It plays an essential role in coordinating access to long-term services and supports that enable people to live independently with dignity in their homes and communities. By managing and distributing federal funding for services such as home care, nutrition assistance, and caregiver support, ACL ensures that older adults and people with disabilities can meet their most basic needs. At a time when the vast majority of aging adults and nearly all disabled people want to live in their communities, this change threatens to increase rates of institutionalization, homelessness, and long-lasting economic hardship.

This drastic measure also disregards and undermines the purpose of ACL, which was created in 2012 to create efficiencies and prevent duplication of efforts among aging and disability networks - now an outcome at significant risk. ACL serves as a hub

across HHS and with other Departments to coordinate services and supports critical services to disabled people and older adults, such as Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS), Independent Living Services (ILS), the Direct Care Workforce Strategies Center and affordable housing, facilitating federal, state, and local cross-sector partnerships focused on efficient use of limited resources. ACL has coordinated many interagency initiatives like the National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers and the Interagency Coordinating Committee on Healthy Aging and Age-Friendly Communities.

Yesterday's announcement offers no guarantees that these essential functions will continue. DAC is also concerned by the proposed cuts to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), an organization that is specifically focused on advancing care and improving the lives of people with mental health and substance use conditions. Such cuts could put the lives of people with these conditions at risk. This development comes amidst other alarming threats, including proposed cuts to Medicaid. This announcement represents a continued affront to the programs that support older adults and people with disabilities, and cannot move forward.

We urge you to reconsider this plan. The DAC stands ready to work with the administration to strengthen the programs and agencies that support aging adults and disabled people and the paid and unpaid caregivers who support them. For additional information or questions, feel free to contact DAC co-chairs Nicole Jorwic (nicole@caringacross.org), Natalie Kean (nkean@justiceinaging.org), and John Poulos (jpoulos@autisticadvocacy.org).

Sincerely,

ADAPT National
ADAPT Montana
ADAPT of Texas
Allies for Independence
American Association of People with Disabilities
American Association on Health and Disability
American Network of Community Options and Resources
Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Care in Action
Caring Across Generations
Center for Medicare Advocacy
Center for Public Representation
Coalition of Texans with Disabilities
CommunicationFIRST

Community Catalyst
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF)
Disability Social History Project
Diverse Elders Coalition
DQIA (Disabled Queers in Action)
Georgia ADAPT
Hand in Hand: The Domestic Employers Network
IEC (Institute for Exceptional Care)
Justice in Aging
Lakeshore Foundation
Little Lobbyists
MomsRising
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)
National Domestic Workers Alliance
National Health Law Program
New Disabled South
North Central Texas Council of Governments' Area Agency on Aging
Personal Attendant Coalition of Texas
PHI
REV UP Texas
RISE Center for Independent Living
Service Employees International Union(SEIU)
TASH
Well Spouse Association