



# U.S. House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

1139 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

Washington, DC 20515

June 24, 2026

The Honorable Russell Vought  
Director  
Office of Management and Budget  
725 17<sup>th</sup> Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20503

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

Re: Comment letter on Regulation for Federal Financial Assistance, 2026-10817 (91 FR 32198)

Director Vought and Secretary Kennedy:

**I write in strong opposition to the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) *Regulation for Federal Financial Assistance* 2026-10817 (91 FR 32198), published in the *Federal Register* on May 29, 2026. This NPRM would destabilize the bedrock of federal discretionary grantmaking and independent research—and is an affront to scientists, researchers, the Constitution, and the American people. The rule proposes politicizing the process through which all discretionary grants are awarded, accelerating this Administration’s weaponization of Congressionally appropriated funding for critical U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) programs. Further, this regulation ignores Congress’s constitutional prerogatives as a co-equal branch of government. This level of illegal executive branch overreach is nothing new in this Administration: Ways and Means Committee members have previously sounded the alarm when HHS closed regional offices that supported children, families, and older adults; arbitrarily barred states from providing proven evidence-based services to LGBTQ+ children at risk of entering foster care; and baselessly withheld \$10 billion in social services funding for five Democratic states. ***I therefore demand that you rescind this deeply damaging rule immediately due to its illegality and harmful long-term effects on both the American public and economy.*****

**The NPRM is an illegal executive overreach of power, usurping the role of Congress in appropriating discretionary funding.** This rule proposes to entirely rewrite 2 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 200, which is the universal legal framework governing every federal grant to every recipient across every agency in the federal government, effectively

seizing the role of Congress as a co-equal branch of government that provides instructions to federal agencies about awarding discretionary grants. In fiscal year (FY) 2024, the federal government sent \$1.1 trillion in discretionary grants to state and local governments. Federal grants are not peripheral to how state and county governments function—they are a core part of the fabric of economic stability, representing 36 cents of every dollar a state spends.<sup>1</sup> Without an act of Congress, the NPRM blatantly exceeds executive authorities, placing under political control the entire financial partnership between the federal government and the states, effective October 1, 2026.

**The NPRM threatens to derail the cures of tomorrow.** The insertion of political whims into the research process threatens the very fibers of unbiased research that have for decades made the United States a global leader in scientific innovation. Subjecting research grants to a political loyalty test, rather than awarding funding based on true scientific merit, functionally eliminates this nation’s capacity to produce gold-standard independent research. Such reputational harm will further encourage experts in various disciplines to pursue their research in other countries, potentially including global competitors like China and Russia. America will no longer consistently be the first country to develop cutting-edge medical treatments, harming the long-term health of the American public and economy.<sup>2</sup>

This is not the first time this Administration has taken a political hatchet to America’s scientific research. The Trump Administration has already terminated hundreds—possibly thousands—of National Institutes of Health (NIH) grants.<sup>3</sup> Clinical trials are continuing to be halted abruptly, leaving patients and physicians without other options.<sup>4</sup> The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that the drastic cuts at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and NIH will result in 53 fewer new prescription drugs over 30 years.<sup>5</sup> The Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) budget request will further harm scientific research with \$16 billion in additional cuts, including \$5 billion in cuts from the NIH and \$129 million in cuts to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.<sup>6</sup> These destructive cuts are leading to a scientific brain drain—encouraging the next generation of researchers to take their talents outside the U.S—threatening U.S. scientific leadership and the economy writ-large, with research disinvestment leading to a loss of as much as \$1 trillion in economic activity over the next decade.<sup>7, 8</sup>

**Furthermore, the NPRM is the next step in the Trump Administration’s quest to systematically eliminate discretionary grants that prevent child abuse, support maternal wellbeing, safeguard family stability, and protect older adults.** Under this rule, new grant programs must align with “administration priorities” before a single application is even solicited,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R40638>

<sup>2</sup> <https://leap.unep.org/en/countries/cn/national-legislation/14th-five-year-plan-bioeconomy-development>

<sup>3</sup> [https://taggs.hhs.gov/Content/Data/HHS\\_Grants\\_Terminated.pdf](https://taggs.hhs.gov/Content/Data/HHS_Grants_Terminated.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2025/03/trump-nih-clinical-trials-patient-safety/682217/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/2025-07/61373-Drugs.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://thehill.com/newsletters/health-care/5815799-trump-requests-16-billion-cuts-hhs/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/04/04/business/dealbook/trump-brain-drain-academia.html>

<sup>8</sup> <https://itif.org/publications/2025/09/15/how-reducing-federal-rd-reduces-gdp-growth/>

and entire categories of funding can be quietly discontinued without a public announcement or a vote simply because the President decides they no longer serve the “national interest.” For human services discretionary grant programs at HHS, this NPRM would permit political appointees to change, undermine, or discontinue:

- Child Welfare discretionary grants intended to address and prevent child abuse and child neglect;
- Child care discretionary grants that assist with child care subsidies for low-income parents of young children;
- Elder Justice Innovation Grants to prevent abuse, neglect, and exploitation, including Adult Protective Services programs;
- Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood grants to promote the healthy formation of two-parent partnerships, relationship education, and father involvement in the lives of their children;
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program research on career pathways and economic mobility;
- Tribal Maternal, Infant & Early Childhood Home Visiting (Tribal MIECHV) grants that provide culturally tailored support and resources to expectant and post-partum parents; and
- U.S. Repatriation Program emergency repatriation training and scenario exercises for getting U.S. citizens back in the country during a crisis or national disaster.

This rule also threatens the work of the HHS Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE), long considered the gold standard of federal independent social sciences research. Such changes eliminate our ability to ensure investments of taxpayer dollars go to programs with evidence of success, such as the Massachusetts Diaper Distribution Demonstration and Research Pilot Program—the only federal funding source for studying material poverty reduction associated with diaper distribution programs.

Ultimately, this NPRM represents the next step in the Trump Administration’s systematic political effort to *eliminate* social services that support vulnerable children, families, and older adults. On April 1, 2025, HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., fired 30 percent of the entire HHS Administration for Children and Families (ACF), which is the largest federal grant funder in the country, managing \$73 billion annually in federal grants. At the end of the Biden Administration, ACF had a ratio of \$31 million grant funds managed per civil servant employee; this mass-firing event increased that ratio to \$42 million per employee, which greatly exceeds comparable ratios at other institutions like the Gates Foundation (11 times higher) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (42 times higher). These numbers underscore the drastic strain the mass firing has placed on program oversight and operations, as ACF was already operating at maximum lean capacity. ***This Administration has already kneecapped the human services system through mass-firing events—and the NPRM would weaponize its remaining grantmaking capabilities to the extent that grants would become too unpredictable, unreliable, and opaque to still serve American children, families, and older adults.***

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This deeply damaging NPRM offers no benefit to advance the national interests of the American people. Rather, it exclusively serves the political interests of a single administration casting around for a novel tool to empower itself to ignore facts, research, and the priorities of the American people. **The long-term effects on Americans' health, wellbeing, and economy are far too great to move forward with this senseless NPRM.** Throughout modern history, every administration—regardless of political party affiliation—has relied on independent research, fact-based information, and unbiased reliable grantmaking as tools of American local economies to prevent waste and target funding to the most effective programs. This NPRM is an illegal overreach of executive authority that will harm our constituents. Therefore, I demand you immediately rescind this destructive proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Richard E. Neal". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "R" and a long, sweeping tail.

The Honorable Richard E. Neal  
*Ranking Member*