

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

May 8, 2026

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.  
Secretary  
Department of Health and Human Services  
Hubert H. Humphrey Building  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Kennedy:

We write to express our strong opposition to the recent Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) policy ending funding for illicit drug test strips.<sup>1</sup> At a time when synthetic opioids and emerging adulterants such as xylazine continue to drive unprecedented preventable deaths, the federal government must reinforce, not retreat from, bipartisan, evidence-based tools that save lives.

Communities across the country, including those we represent, are facing an increasingly volatile and dangerous drug supply. Fentanyl remains the leading cause of overdose deaths nationwide, and the rise of xylazine- and medetomidine-adulterated fentanyl has further complicated both overdose response and treatment. Test strips for fentanyl, xylazine, and other substances are proven, cost-effective public health tools to detect lethal adulterants, reduce the risk of fatality from illicit drug use.<sup>2</sup> While they may not prevent addiction, test strips can lessen its toll and give drug users the chance to survive and recover.<sup>3</sup>

Eliminating federal support for these test strips would have immediate and damaging consequences. State, tribal, and local health agencies rely heavily on SAMHSA funding to distribute these supplies through trusted community partners, first responders, and public health departments. Removing this support would force many programs to scale back or shut down, increasing the likelihood of fatal overdoses—particularly in the rural and underserved communities that already experience treatment gaps.

Congress has consistently funded test strips in a bipartisan manner, most recently mandating them last year in the bipartisan SUPPORT Act reauthorization,<sup>4</sup> and has worked productively with Democratic and Republican administrations to address the threat of emerging drug threats such as xylazine. Last year, the Trump Administration called on Congress to pass popular legislation to limit the spread of illicit xylazine,<sup>5</sup> and explicitly endorsed test strips.<sup>6</sup> Limiting these funds, especially through a unilateral mandate, undermines this bipartisan consensus and will be felt in Democrat- and Republican-represented congressional districts across the country.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/dear-colleague-letter-upated-hr-funding-guidance.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.pew.org/en/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2026/01/drug-checking-equipment-can-reduce-overdose-deaths>

<sup>3</sup> <https://americanhealth.jhu.edu/news/fentanyl-test-strips>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.congress.gov/119/plaws/publ44/PLAW-119publ44.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.justice.gov/ag/media/1388546/dl?inline>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/dear-colleague-letter-executive-order-ending-crime-disorder-americas-streets-07302025.pdf>

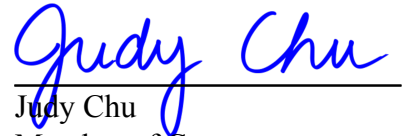
We respectfully request that HHS reverse any directive restricting funding for fentanyl or xylazine test strips and promptly clarify to grantees that these supplies remain eligible for federal support. Moving forward, we urge the administration to consult with Congress on this shared priority. Thank you for your continued partnership in the bipartisan fight against the overdose epidemic.

Sincerely,




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Jimmy Panetta  
Member of Congress




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Judy Chu  
Member of Congress




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Madeleine Dean  
Member of Congress



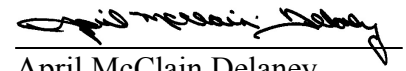
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Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress



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Adelta S. Grijalva  
Member of Congress




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April McClain Delaney  
Member of Congress



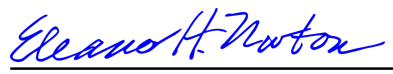
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Dave Min  
Member of Congress




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Gwen S. Moore  
Member of Congress




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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



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Lori Trahan  
Member of Congress



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Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress