

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 5, 2026

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

The Honorable Jayanta Bhattacharya, M.D., Ph.D.  
Official performing the delegable duties of the CDC Director  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
1600 Clifton Road  
Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Secretary Kennedy and Director Bhattacharya,

I write to you with serious concern regarding news that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has paused diagnostic testing services for dozens of infectious diseases, including rabies and pox viruses, as of March 30, 2026.<sup>1</sup> This sudden reduction in testing—one of the largest of its kind—demands immediate explanation. The American public deserves to know whether this decision is truly the result of a routine quality review, as the agency has asserted, or whether it is the direct and predictable consequence of this administration's reckless dismantling of our public health infrastructure and, critically, how Americans' safety will be safeguarded in its wake.

As you are aware, the CDC supports state and local public health laboratories across the country in testing specimens and providing clinical guidance to providers and health departments for a wide variety of infectious diseases. While routine diagnostics are handled by hospitals, commercial laboratories, and state and local public health laboratories, the CDC's preeminent testing program is indispensable in its ability to test for rare and dangerous pathogens that other laboratories lack the capability to analyze. Moreover, the CDC's testing program is critical for disease surveillance, which informs infectious disease prevention and response efforts. Accordingly, it is alarming for the agency to suddenly announce that the country's leading laboratory is no longer able to conduct diagnostic testing for dozens of dangerous diseases.

According to the CDC's website, the agency has discontinued or temporarily paused lab testing services for 32 tests.<sup>2</sup> Temporarily paused tests include rabies, adenovirus, poxvirus, and

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<sup>1</sup> *Test Directory*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (last updated April 27, 2026), <https://cdc.gov/infectious-diseases-labs/php/test-directory/index.html>.

<sup>2</sup> *Test Directory*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (last updated April 27, 2026), <https://cdc.gov/infectious-diseases-labs/php/test-directory/index.html>.

varicella-zoster (the virus that causes chickenpox and shingles). Discontinued tests include Epstein-Barr virus, the oropouche virus, as well as a respiratory panel that tests for SARS-2 (which causes COVID-19) and influenza A and B.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, after layoffs and reductions-in-force, the agency—which is often the first call for providers and health departments for urgent clinical consultation on these diseases—has lost many of its technical experts.

While some of these tests are available via commercial vendors (e.g., the respiratory panel for SARS-2 and influenza), many of the affected tests are not easily replaced. As infectious disease expert J. Glenn Morris Jr., MD, warned, without CDC capacity, “you may have an outbreak that suddenly is simmering and breaks loose, and you lack the capacity within certain states to make that diagnosis because the laboratory of last resort, CDC, is no longer taking samples.”<sup>4</sup>

While the administration has characterized this pause as the result of a temporary quality review,<sup>5</sup> it is impossible to accept that explanation at face value given this administration’s disregard for the agency and role of public health. This announcement comes in the wake of an unprecedented year of turmoil at the CDC, which included mass layoffs and the ousting of its Senate-confirmed Director after less than a month. According to data from the Office of Personnel Management, the CDC lost more than 3,000 employees since the beginning of President Trump’s second term. This represents a cut of roughly 25 percent to the agency’s workforce,<sup>6</sup> including about half the staff in CDC’s rabies and poxvirus labs.<sup>7</sup> These are not the conditions under which a healthy institution conducts a routine quality review, but rather the conditions under which a gutted institution suspends essential public services.

I request written responses to the following no later than **May 19, 2026**:

1. What is the precise reason for the suspension of each of the more than two dozen tests currently paused or newly discontinued? Please provide an explanation for each of the impacted tests.

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<sup>3</sup> See *Test Directory*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (last updated April 27, 2026), <https://cdc.gov/infectious-diseases-labs/php/test-directory/index.html>; see also Max Rego, *CDC Pauses Diagnostic Testing for Rabies, Other Infectious Diseases*, The Hill (April 2, 2026),

<https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/5812892-cdc-diagnostic-testing-updates-rabies-infectious-disease/>.

<sup>4</sup> Anthony Stitt, *CDC Pauses Lab Testing for Dozens of Diseases*, Healio (April 2, 2026),

<https://www.healio.com/news/infectious-disease/20260402/cdc-pauses-lab-testing-for-dozens-of-diseases>.

<sup>5</sup> *CDC Pauses Dozens of Types of Lab Testing During Evaluation and in Wake of Downsizing*, CNN (April 2, 2026),

<https://www.cnn.com/2026/04/02/health/cdc-lab-testing-downsizing>.

<sup>6</sup> Lisa Park, *CDC Drops Disease Testing Services Amid Staff Cuts, Experts Warn of Risks*, Prism News (April 1, 2026), <https://www.prismnews.com/news/cdc-drops-disease-testing-services-amid-staff-cuts-experts>.

<sup>7</sup> *CDC Pauses Dozens of Types of Lab Testing During Evaluation and in Wake of Downsizing*, CNN (April 2, 2026), <https://www.cnn.com/2026/04/02/health/cdc-lab-testing-downsizing>.

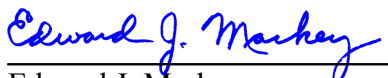
2. How many CDC laboratory staff positions have been eliminated since January 20, 2025? Please provide staffing numbers as of December 31, 2025, and as of today for each of the laboratory teams, including the rabies and poxvirus labs.
3. What specific benchmarks must be met before each paused test is restored, and what is the projected date for resuming all “temporarily paused” testing services?
4. What interim arrangements have been made with state and local laboratories, commercial labs, and/or academic partners to fill the diagnostic gap during this pause? For each suspended test, please list which alternative laboratories will be performing these tests during CDC’s suspension or if alternative laboratories are not available. If a commercial laboratory is performing the test, please list the cost of each test.
5. Given the national security implications, has the CDC consulted with the Department of Defense or the Intelligence Community on the testing suspension?

The CDC's ability to detect and respond to infectious disease is not a superfluous or perfunctory exercise—it is a matter of life and death for the American people. This administration has wielded a sledgehammer against our nation’s preeminent public health agency and overall infrastructure. These sweeping changes to CDC’s diagnostic capacity, with no transparency into its reasoning, are dangerous. In the absence of any credible explanation, the American public is left to draw the obvious conclusion: that these are not the incidental effects of a quality review, but the predictable results of deliberate policy choices.

From the firing of career public health workers and the sidelining of scientific expertise to the long-term absence of a permanent Director and the systematic defunding of disease surveillance programs, this administration has relentlessly attacked and undermined the infrastructure that stands between the American people and the next outbreak. Experts agree that there is no question of *whether* another pandemic will hit, but *when*. The CDC is charged with detecting emerging threats and protecting Americans from disease, but it cannot do so without a strong laboratory infrastructure.

I look forward to your prompt and complete response.

Sincerely,



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Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator