

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

August 18, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.,

On August 5th, 2025, the Department of Health and Human Services announced that they would be rescinding funding for the Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI) Program, which is a program through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) that supports legal advocacy for those with disabilities. We are concerned about the impact this decision will have on entities serving individuals with disabilities in Michigan and other states across the nation. We, the undersigned members of the Michigan delegation, urge the Department of Health and Human Services to reverse this decision and release the originally allotted funds.

In Michigan, Disability Rights Michigan (DRM) is the independent, private, nonprofit, nonpartisan protection and advocacy organization authorized by Federal and State law to advocate and protect the legal rights of people with disabilities. This year, DRM expected to receive \$960,270 in funding from Protection and Advocacy (P&A) grants from the PAIMI Program. While the grants are typically awarded at once, they were being released to recipients this year in incremental amounts. After DRM received the final payment of its grant on July 31, 2025, that same award of \$130,485 was rescinded by HHS on August 5, 2025.

Despite having already been appropriated by Congress and enacted into law by President Trump when he signed the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (H.R.1968) on March 15, 2025, funds for the PAIMI Program this year are being disrupted through these rescissions from HHS. We have significant concerns about these rescissions and question why the grant funding was delivered in portions instead of at once.

There are 57 independent Protection & Advocacy (P&A) agencies in the United States, serving all 50 States and U.S. territories, the District of Columbia and Native Americans. Established in 1975, the P&A network continues to serve an increasing number of people with disabilities due to an aging population. DRM is a part of this P&A network and is an essential and nonpartisan organization that helps individuals with disabilities. Their advocates and lawyers advise

individuals with disabilities on how to advocate for their human, civil and legal rights within the state of Michigan, and they play an important role in investigating abuse and neglect.

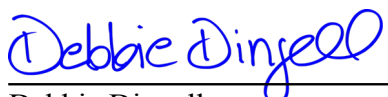
We are concerned that without full funding, the P&A network will face tremendous fiscal uncertainty, limiting their ability to serve individuals with disabilities who depend on their assistance. We worry there will be fewer investigations of abuse, neglect, and exploitation that will harm lives. Through these actions, HHS is needlessly putting lives at risk and reducing the ability for our government to protect those in need. Without the grant, DRM will not be able to ensure patients are being discharged to appropriate placements with reasonable accommodations, represent individuals in administrative hearings to ensure they are receiving the benefits they deserve, and advocate for children so they can receive the proper behavioral supports needed to remain in school and receive instruction.

Given the significant impact funding recissions will have on DRM and other disability organizations in the P&A network across the United States, we request a response to the following questions within 1 month of receipt of the letter:

- When should DRM and other organizations expect to have the funds from SAMHSA to return to their organizations?
- What is the rationale for rescinding funding for Protection & Advocacy Grants for individuals with disabilities, which support programs to investigate abuse and neglect in facilities that care for or treat individuals with mental illness?
- In the past, the funding was delivered in lump sum, but this year was being released in installments. Can you explain the reasoning for the change in distribution of funds?
- Can you commit to ensuring that individuals with disabilities will continue to have access to legal advocacy that protects their human, legal, and civil rights, and explain in detail how you plan to continue providing those services?
- What is the Department's broader strategy to ensure that the rights and protections of individuals with disabilities are safeguarded?

Thank you for your consideration in this matter and we look forward to receiving a response.

Sincerely,



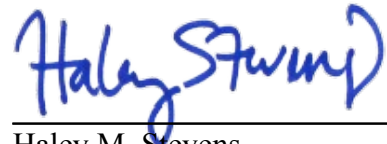
Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



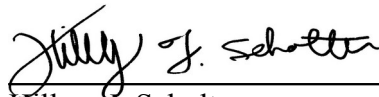
Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



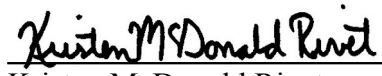
Shri Thanedar
Member of Congress



Haley M. Stevens
Member of Congress



Hillary J. Scholten
Member of Congress



Kristen McDonald Rivet
Member of Congress