

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 4, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Kennedy,

As Members of the Democratic Women’s Caucus, Congressional Mamas’ Caucus, and Congressional Dads Caucus we write to express our concern with implementing Operation Stork Speed while the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) guts public health infrastructure at the expense of parents and babies. We support the goal of ensuring infant formula products are safe and accessible, and we strongly believe in greater oversight over infant formula manufacturing. However, we are deeply concerned that launching this initiative amidst regulatory rollbacks and sweeping layoffs will strain the ability of the agency to conduct a reliable review and put babies at risk. The infant formula supply chain is fragile, and even a small disruption can have devastating consequences. No parent or guardian should struggle to feed their child due to failed safety standards, corporate greed or supply chain failures. Ensuring safe, affordable, and accessible formula is a matter of public health, economic justice, and basic dignity for families—especially women who are often primary caregivers.

We ask for your swift response to our questions regarding how you will ensure infant formula is safe, accessible and affordable for all women and babies who need it in the face of ongoing regulatory reversals and staff reduction.

Many families across the United States rely on infant formula for some or all of their child’s nutrition. In 2023, 74% of mothers reported using formula at some point within their child’s first 12 months of life.¹ As you know, an unprecedented infant formula recall, coupled with a fragile infant formula marketplace, led to a nationwide shortage in 2022. This crisis highlighted the urgent need to bolster oversight of infant formula to protect access to, and the safety of, this vital resource.

More recently, a 2025 Consumer Reports investigation found that at least half of the 41 infant formulas tested contained harmful levels of at least one contaminant.² These findings underscore the need for rigorous oversight – not less. President Trump’s Executive Order 14192,

¹ [“The State of Feeding”. 2025. Bobbie & Willow.](#)

² [Kirchner, Lauren. “We Tested 41 Baby Formulas for Lead and Arsenic”. 2025. Consumer Reports.](#)

“Unleashing Prosperity Through Deregulation” would require HHS to repeal 10 regulations for every new rule it promulgates. While we support Operation Stork Speed’s goal to “uphold the safety, nutritional adequacy and resilience of infant formula and the infant formula supply,” we are deeply concerned the mandated deregulation makes Operation Stork Speed completely unsafe and unworkable, jeopardizing parents and children’s access to safe formula.

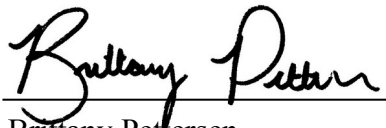
Additionally, not only has this Administration disregarded policies rooted in scientific evidence, but the decision to also lay off 20,000 HHS employees and 3,500 FDA employees – including employees who oversaw health and safety research of infant formula– sets this operation up to fail.³ Gutting the workforce responsible for a thoughtful review of infant formula nutrients makes a reevaluation of the standards for formula dangerous. From gutting staff responsible for scientific research to perpetuating anti-vaccine theories, you have repeatedly undermined scientific research. This, coupled with President Trump’s arbitrary mandate for federal agencies to repeal 10 regulations for every new rule, serves to further jeopardize the health and safety of families.

Improving access to formula is a complex and nuanced issue that requires an evidence-based approach with the right regulations and an adequate number of expert staff. Therefore, we urge you to halt Operation Stork Speed and only resume when the employees that DOGE terminated have been rehired and the FDA is fully staffed to ensure an evidence-based review can be done. We also call on you to prioritize evidence-based policy and evaluations in all of the agency’s actions. Additionally, we request your timely response to the following questions:

1. Have the FDA employees that DOGE terminated been rehired? If not, will you rehire FDA employees that DOGE terminated who oversaw infant formula safety research? If not, what is your plan to ensure that the review of the nutrient makeup of infant formula will be a comprehensive, scientific, and evidence-based review?
2. If the FDA promulgates a rule on infant formula safety in response to your Request for Information for the nutrient review, what 10 regulations will be repealed? How will the elimination of those regulations impact public health and safety?
3. How will HHS ensure that infant formula is regularly tested for contaminants? If a contaminant is identified, does the FDA currently have enough staff to be deployed to a facility to investigate the contamination and take corrective measures to protect infants?
4. How will HHS ensure safe infant formula is accessible and affordable for all women, families, and babies who need it?

Sincerely,

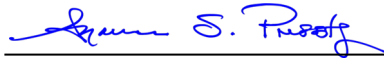
³ [Anna, Edney. “FDA’s Baby Formula Research Gutted After RFK Jr. Safety Pledge.” 2025. Bloomberg.](#)



Brittany Pettersen

Member

Democratic Women's Caucus

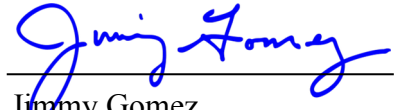


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Reproductive Health Care
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Democratic Women's Caucus



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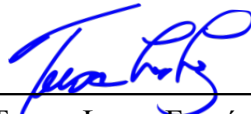
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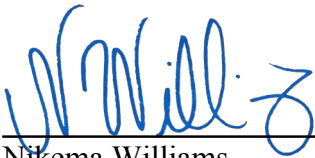


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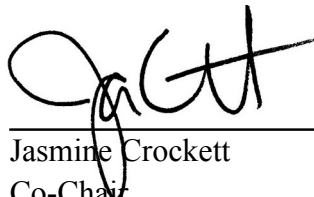
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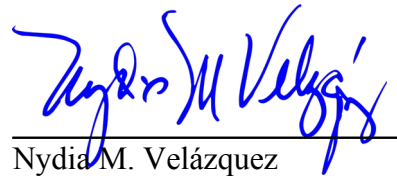


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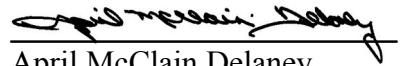
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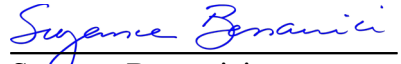
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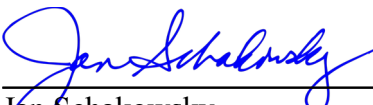
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