

United States Senate Committee on Finance
July 22, 2025

Hearing to Consider the nominations of The Honorable Jonathan McKernan, of Tennessee, to be an Under Secretary of the Treasury, vice J. Nellie Liang, resigned and Alex Adams, of Idaho, to be Assistant Secretary for Family Support, Department of Health and Human Services, vice January Contreras.

Question for the Record submitted to Alex Adams from Senator Grassley

Over the past decade, I have actively investigated the safety and wellbeing of unaccompanied alien children. My oversight has revealed areas that warrant prioritization and attention by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), including:

- Support of ongoing efforts by the Trump Administration to process a Biden-Harris backlog of over 65,000 reports regarding the safety of unaccompanied migrant children.¹
- HHS cooperation with law enforcement, including complying with subpoenas to HHS, in order to address criminal activity in the unaccompanied alien children sponsorship process.²
- Ensuring that contractors and grantees are fully responsive to oversight requests and produce all records requested by Congress.³
- A commitment that ACF will not retaliate against any whistleblowers, including those who identify Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) failures in vetting sponsors of unaccompanied alien children.

Question 1:

- If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of unaccompanied children by supporting the efforts listed above?

Response: Yes, safeguarding children, especially those in HHS custody, is a primary responsibility of this position.

- If confirmed, will you commit to providing timely and complete responses to letters and fulfilling document requests from both parties in Congress?

Response: Yes, I support Secretary Kennedy's commitment to transparency.

- If confirmed, will you commit to not preventing ACF contractors and grantees from responding to my congressional oversight inquiries?

¹ Floor Remarks by Senator Chuck Grassley, *Grassley: The Trump Administration is Cleaning Up the Mess from Biden-Harris Failure to Protect Unaccompanied Migrant Kids* (June 10, 2025), <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/remarks/grassley-the-trump-administration-is-cleaning-up-the-mess-from-biden-harris-failure-to-protect-unaccompanied-migrant-kids>.

² Chairman Charles E. Grassley letter to the Honorable Robert F. Kennedy, Secretary of Health and Human Services, *Backlog of Unaccompanied Migrant Children Report* (May 27, 2025), <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/grassley-to-hhs-backlog-of-unaccompanied-migrant-children-reports.pdf>

³ Press Release, Office of Sen. Charles E. Grassley, *Grassley Reignites Oversight of HHS's Unaccompanied Migrant Children Program* (March 11, 2025), <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/grassley-reignites-oversight-of-hhss-unaccompanied-migrant-children-program>.

Response: Yes, I support the oversight role of Congress and efforts to uphold its efficacy.

- If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring that ACF will not retaliate against whistleblowers and hold employees accountable that do?

Response: Yes, I will uphold whistleblower protections.

Questions for the Record submitted to Alex Adams from Senator James Lankford:

Question 1: In a 2022 guidance document, the Biden Administration interpreted the Hyde amendment as only applying to the actual provision of an abortion, not including all hurdles to provide one. Therefore, if the Biden Administration's Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) had custody of an unaccompanied child who requested an abortion, this HHS office was required to use federal taxpayer dollars to transport the individual, oftentimes across state lines, set up an appointment, all for the sole purpose of that person receiving an abortion. Because HHS did not pay for the abortion itself, they could argue that Hyde was still being applied. This was an issue I brought up consistently to the Biden Administration and one that I flagged for the incoming Trump Administration.

Thankfully, just over a week ago, the Office of Legal Counsel issued an updated guidance document clarifying that they, "find the Hyde Amendment bars ORR from providing transportation to an unaccompanied child for the purpose of obtaining an abortion unless the abortion falls into one of the Amendment's enumerated exceptions."

I am appreciative of the Administration's correction on this matter to maintain the Hyde amendment, and I look forward to working with you to ensure this updated policy is implemented when you are confirmed.

Can you confirm that if confirmed you will enforce this updated policy?

Response: I will support this policy.

Question 2: *Do you agree that faith-based adoption and foster care agencies should be able to continue to partner with the government to serve children and families without sacrificing their sincerely held religious beliefs?*

Response: Yes, I agree. If confirmed, I will follow the law to protect religious liberties.

Questions for the Record submitted to Alex Adams from Senator Steve Daines.

This Congress, Republicans enacted commonsense reforms to Medicaid and SNAP in the One Big Beautiful Bill based on the principle that abled-bodied Americans should be required to work in return for welfare benefits. I strongly believe we can and should build on the success of these efforts by advancing much needed reforms to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, which has strayed from its original goals of encouraging work, keeping families together, and reducing dependency. In particular, TANF requires additional financial

safeguards and more accountability around state use of TANF funds and must address the inherent flaws underlying the current compliance system used to measure a state's performance in successfully moving people into work. That's why I first introduced the JOBS for Success Act, which would implement a framework where states are judged based on measurable indicators showing employment and wage gains. It would also establish financial safeguards and guardrails on state use of TANF funds, which includes targeting TANF non-assistance to families under 200 percent of the poverty level, implementing spending deadlines and limiting carryover of funds, directing more TANF non-assistance towards work, education, and training activities, and requiring reporting of improper payments. The Office of the Administration for Children and Families at HHS has direct responsibility over the administration of TANF and meaningful reform will undoubtedly require your partnership.

Question 1: Dr. Adams, do you believe reforms like those I mentioned align with ACF's vision and priorities as it relates to improving TANF?

Response: I look forward to working with you to review reform ideas and ensure the TANF program is fulfilling its important mission.

As a result of the unprecedented humanitarian crisis that unfolded at our southern border under the previous administration, more than 500,000 unaccompanied minors crossed the border and entered the Office of Refugee Resettlement's (ORR) Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC) program. Federal law requires ORR to feed, shelter, and provide medical care for UACs under their care until they are able to release them to vetted sponsors while they await immigration proceedings. Under President Biden's administration, thousands of children were released to unvetted, potentially dangerous sponsors, increasing the already high risk of trafficking and exploitation these children faced. Even worse, the administration simply lost track of hundreds of thousands of these children, with DHS law enforcement estimating the addresses collected by DHS were incorrect nearly 80 percent of the time.

Question 2: Dr. Adams, what steps will you take to ensure migrant children under the care of HHS ORR are protected from exploitation and abuse?

Response: Protecting the well-being of children in HHS custody is a primary responsibility of this position. A child welfare principle I will apply in this role is safety first, because safe and timely release must promote public safety and must ensure that sponsors are able to provide for the well-being of children, and I look forward to understanding and potentially building on the reforms Secretary Kennedy has made to improve sponsor vetting in ORR.

Questions for the Record submitted to Alex Adams from Ranking Member Wyden

The Role of ACF

Question 1: You repeatedly referred to ACF as a grantmaking body throughout your nomination process. If confirmed, will you commit to upholding ACF's regulatory oversight role?

Response: Yes, if confirmed, I will uphold the law and the responsibilities of the office.

Question 2: If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring that federal dollars are used to improve child and family well-being, and not as a vehicle to push political or ideological agendas?

Response: Yes, the foremost responsibility of this office is to advance the well-being of children and families.

Question 3: If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring that people with lived experience, both parents and young people, would have a voice in the work ACF undertakes?

Response: Individuals who benefit from ACF programs are an important resource for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of government policies and programs. If confirmed, I intend to make best use of available resources to find efficient and novel approaches to enduring problems.

Child Welfare

Question 4: During our one-on-one meeting, I asked about *Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA)* grant recipients in Oregon being given only two weeks (14 days) to submit new, 85-page applications to be shelter providers. This application window is shorter than in previous years, is shorter than the statutorily required 30-day window for application submission, and the application requirements are now greater. When staff reached out to ACF about this, ACF expressed its commitment to “strong partnerships with service providers across the country” and said it would “review applications expeditiously.”

- Will ACF commit to restoring the statutorily-required 30-day grant application window?

Response: I will review the grant requirements and ensure that the RHYA program is reflecting legal parameters.

- Will ACF commit to maintaining essential RHYA programs and not allowing the new application requirements to diminish the service landscape for young people experiencing homelessness?

Response: Yes, I commit to upholding the mission responsibilities of the Runaway Homeless Youth Act.

Question 5: As I mentioned during your confirmation hearing, my staff is writing an addendum to the Committee’s report – *Warehouses of Neglect* – on the persistent neglect and abuse of LGBTQIA+ children in residential treatment facilities (RTFs). The addendum draws from over a hundred stories of LGBTQIA+ youth, and makes clear that LGBTQ+ kids may be suffering from extreme isolation in the facilities, abuse, and neglect on the basis of their LGBTQIA+ identities inside RTFs. Testimony reviewed by staff revealed instances of verbal abuse by staff and peers, and some instances in which staff withheld affirming clothes, makeup, and wigs as a form of punishment. Put simply, this review suggests that LGBTQIA+ children may experience harms related to their identities and unique barriers to care in these settings. Organizations like the American Academy of Pediatrics agree. If confirmed, do you commit to briefing my staff on how you will address our forthcoming report’s findings and to working with my office to find a pathway forward to keeping all kids safe?

Response: I look forward to working with you and your office to address issues relative to the safety and well-being of children and families.

Question 6: The Committee's investigation into RTFs found that Congress needs to legislate to improve the conditions in RTFs and the broader behavioral health landscape. I am working on a bill that will (i) raise the floor for congregate care standards, (ii) invest in community-based alternatives for care, and (iii) strengthen the oversight of congregate care facilities. If confirmed, do you commit to providing my staff comprehensive and timely technical assistance on my bill?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and your staff on technical assistance and, more broadly, to find collaborative solutions for issues impacting the well-being of children and families. As we have discussed, in Idaho I reduced congregate care usage by 35% over the past year.

Question 7: LGBTQIA+ children and youth are [overrepresented](#) in the child welfare system, are more likely to [experience abuse](#), and are more likely to be placed in congregate care settings than other youth in foster care.

- What is your view on the causes of disproportionality in child welfare and how should it be rectified?

Response: If confirmed, I want to ensure that ACF programs treat all children and youth fairly and with compassion and respect for their human dignity.

- What specific steps will you take, if confirmed, to ensure that ACF is attending to the unique needs and challenges facing LGBTQIA children, youth and families?

Response: If confirmed, I intend to support and uphold a mission to advance the safety and well-being of all children impacted by our programs.

- To help address some of these disparities, the Designated Placements rule was finalized in 2024. Do you support the Designated Placements rule?

Response: If confirmed, I commit to reviewing all standing rules and regulations relative to the well-being of children impacted by ACF programs.

Question 8: How do you plan to protect LGBTQIA+ foster youth from discrimination, particularly given your creation of a faith-based foster care recruitment position and repeated refusal to affirm that religious providers should not be allowed to discriminate against LGBTQIA+ families throughout your confirmation process?

Response: If confirmed, I will work with states to try to find a safe, appropriate, and loving home for every youth in the foster system.

Question 9: In recent years, the Committee has led the effort to refocus the child welfare system further upstream by prioritizing prevention of child maltreatment, particularly with the passage

of the *Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)*. The Committee has a strong interest in ensuring that FFPSA is fully implemented and the opportunities in the law are fully realized.

- What barriers to full implementation of the law do you see at the state and federal levels?
- What steps do you think should be taken to resolve some of these challenges?
- What do you see as ACF's role in making the law work to its fullest potential?
- What do you see as Congress's role in making the law work to its fullest potential?
- If confirmed, how will you use your leadership role to prioritize the prevention of child abuse and neglect?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and your Congressional colleagues to address the scourge of child abuse and neglect by looking for ways to implement Family First in the most effective manner possible. Family First was a landmark change in child welfare policy and was signed into law by President Trump. If confirmed, I will seek to provide maximum flexibility under the law so that Congressional intent is met. I will seek to provide technical assistance, best practices, and guidance to enable all states to have a prevention plan and the capacity to bill for appropriate, effective services and have alternatives to congregate care.

Question 10: The work of FFPSA's Title IV-E Prevention Clearinghouse in reviewing and approving programs and services is of particular import to the Ranking Member in reorienting the child welfare system to upstream, prevention efforts.

- What specific ideas do you have for how to improve the Clearinghouse?

Response: If confirmed, I will work to ensure that the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse provides timely review of programs within the confines of the Family First allowable categories and evidentiary standards. If confirmed, I am eager to work with ACF staff to ensure that such reviews consider the unique needs of tribal communities.

Question 11: To date, 11 States and 6 Tribes have implemented separate, kin-specific licensing. If confirmed, what would be your approach to aid and encourage more States to implement streamlined kin licensing standards?

Response: There can be a benefit to the fostering of children by their kin, and I look forward to working with you to explore this further. Idaho adopted kin-specific licensing effective July 1st of this year because of our review of the available evidence, and I would work to provide technical assistance, best practices, and guidance to enable all states to make the best decisions for their communities regarding kin-specific licensing.

Question 12: How will you work to leverage TANF, Title IV-B, and aging programs to support kinship care as a prevention strategy for keeping children out of foster care?

Response: I share your objective to keep children safe and out of foster care where appropriate and, if confirmed, I will work to leverage the resources at our disposal.

Question 13: ACL oversees a number of programs that support kinship families – including the nation's only grandfamilies and kinship TA Center and the National Family Caregiver Support

Program. With the planned merger of ACL programs into ACFC, what opportunities do you see to support kinship care?

Response: I look forward to working with you to ensure the prospective merger of ACL and ACF results in quality kinship care.

Question 14: In Idaho, you [advocated for](#) additional child welfare staff to prevent the removal of children from their homes and to reduce turnover and high caseloads among your workforce. Child welfare workforce issues persist nationwide. How should ACF address child welfare and other human services workforce concerns?

Response: If confirmed, I will work with states and localities to identify ways to help maintain a flourishing child welfare workforce.

Question 15: Families of color are [overrepresented](#) in the child welfare system. Children of color are more likely to be placed in foster care and congregate care than white children, experience longer stays in care, and are more likely to be separated from siblings. Despite [copious data](#) that illustrates and underscores this reality, the current Administration is seeking to dismantle programs that would explicitly address disproportionality, defunding initiatives and threatening programs.

- What is your view on the causes of disproportionality in child welfare and how it should be rectified?

Response: I look forward to working with you to support the health and well-being of all children.

- What specific steps will you take, if confirmed, to ensure that ACF is reducing the number of children of color in the system?

Response: ACF does not make decisions over which children end up in foster care. These are decisions made at the state level and are ultimately made by the courts. I will work with states to ensure all children in their custody find loving homes in the foster system.

Question 16: In Idaho, you extended foster care to age 23 to better serve older youth in their transition to adulthood. [Available data](#) clearly show that young adults who remain in foster care past age 18 fare better than their peers who age out of the system earlier. Would extending foster care be a priority for ACF under your leadership?

Response: Federal law provides states with an option to receive reimbursement for extended foster care, but this is ultimately a state decision. Idaho chose to extend foster care to age 23 based on our review of available outcomes data. If confirmed I will seek to provide technical assistance, best practices, and guidance to enable states to make the best decisions possible regarding extended foster care as an option for their state.

- In Idaho, how did you and your agency navigate political differences in moving this legislation forward?

Response: House Bill 245 had bipartisan co-sponsors and passed with wide margins (53-17 in the House, 21-14 in the Senate) because the Idaho Legislature was presented with available data on the benefits of extended foster care.

Question 17: The Committee has jurisdiction over the Chafee Program, and members have expressed a strong interest in ensuring that the federal government is doing all it can to support young people who have experienced foster care in their transition to adulthood. What are your ideas for how to better support young people who age out of foster care?

Response: I look forward to working with you to review reform ideas and ensure the Chafee program is fulfilling its important mission.

Question 18: The Social Services Block Grant (SSBG), a particularly important source of flexible human services funding made available to States and counties, is administered by ACF. The small office at ACF that oversees SSBG lost its entire staff to recent RIFs earlier this year. States turn to this office with questions related to SSBG and it provides the only state-by-state and national data concerning SSBG. How will you ensure that ACF is responsive to state inquiries related to SSBG, that SSBG funds continue to be disbursed without delay?

- How will ACF compile and make public timely data about SSBG expenditures and uses without these essential federal personnel?

Response: If confirmed, I will work to ensure that staffing levels are appropriate to ensure that vital functions of the department are successfully continued.

Child Care & Head Start

Question 19: As I mentioned during our one-on-one meeting, I am particularly concerned about Head Start funding as Oregon Head Start programs continue to reach out over funding delays that threaten to close their doors. Teachers' jobs are on the line. Working parents are uncertain if they will have the child care they need tomorrow. Sadly, we're not unique in Oregon. Head Start programs across the country are suffering the same funding delays. Several members on and off this Committee have raised this issue with you and other HHS officials and nominees. During your hearing, you repeatedly said your job is to follow the law and get Congressionally-appropriated funding to grantees in a timely manner. This week, the independent Government Accountability Office found that the Trump administration is violating the law by withholding Head Start funding. If confirmed, will you commit to fixing this issue once and for all so that Head Start programs no longer face uncertainty and receive their funding in a timely manner, as required by the law?

Response: If confirmed, I will review the facts about these claims and follow the law.

Question 20: The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) is under the jurisdiction of ACF and provides eligible families assistance to help pay for child care programs for their children, so that they can work, attend job training, or enroll in an educational program. Will you guarantee these crucial services will continue without interruption?

- Parents want their children to be safe and learning while in child care. How do you plan to ensure the federal law is doing all it can to ensure the help and safety of children in child care?

Response: Safeguarding children is a primary responsibility of this position. I look forward to working with you to review ideas and ensure the CCDF program is ensuring the health and safety of children.

Question: 21: There is a child care worker shortage in this country because they earn such low wages. Child care providers are struggling to keep their doors open because of this shortage and other rising costs. As a result, parents have a hard time finding the child care they need for their families. It's important the CCDF program does what it can to support stable child care operations for the providers that serve families participating in CCDF. To improve parent choice, stabilize child care operations, and make it easier to serve families with subsidies, the 2024 CCDF rule finally aligned program rules with the CCDBG Act by requiring states and territories to pay child care providers at the beginning of service and based on enrollment unless they demonstrated these weren't generally accepted payment practices. That increases parent choice for participating families, as well as for families who don't receive subsidies. You promised in your testimony that "following the law" was going to be your "guiding principle." If confirmed, do you commit to retaining these regulations?

Response: If confirmed, I will review this rule. My understanding is all states or *nearly all* states have requested a waiver from some or all of these rule changes. If confirmed I will review these rules with states and other stakeholders to determine if they are working as intended.

Question 22: What specific steps will you take to ensure that grant recipients like Head Start Programs, facing delayed disbursements and communication breakdowns, are supported through remaining ACF regional offices or other federal mechanisms? If confirmed, do you commit to guaranteeing Head Start programs once again have a point of contact.

Response: I will work to ensure timely communications with grantees.

ACL Reorganization and HHS RIFs

Question 23: The Secretary's planned reorganization of the Department, the Administration on Community Living (ACL) would become the responsibility of the Assistant Secretary of ACF. ACL is the office responsible for older Americans and Americans with disabilities. ACL has been the primary office implementing the Older Americans Act and the Elder Justice Act. Do you support this proposed reorganization of ACL into ACF?

Response: I support the Secretary's vision and road map for modernizing the HHS operational structure, to be more efficient and effective. I will ensure vital functions of the agency are continued.

- What expertise or background do you have that would help you oversee the responsibilities of ACL, which are more specific to older adults and people with disabilities?

Response: I look forward to working with ACL leadership to ensure ACL's mission continues successfully. I have worked with ACL programs through my roles running our state budget agency and our state health and human services agency. My positive engagement with these programs is reflected by the letters of support from our local Commission on Aging and Meals on Wheels.

- What specific steps will you take to promote long-term services and supports to ensure older Americans and people with disabilities can live in their own homes, get the supports and services they need to age in place, and are protected against fraud, abuse, and scams?

Response: I look forward to building upon ACL's work supporting Area Agencies on Aging and programs designed to provide support and care to older Americans aging in place.

Question 24: With the planned reorganization of the Department, ACL will become part of ACF. The *Developmental Disabilities Act* created the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AIDD) at ACL. The purpose of the Act is to “assure that individuals with developmental disabilities and their families participate in the design of and have access to needed community services, individualized supports, and other forms of assistance that promote self-determination, independence, productivity, and integration and inclusion in all facets of community life ...” Following the planned reorganization, will HHS comply with this statute?

Response: I will follow the law.

Question 25: Will you engage the aging and disability community to weigh in on the reorganization of ACL and changes to offices previously housed within ACL?

Response: I look forward to engaging with both the disability and aging communities.

Question 26: With half of the ACL staff being fired since January and almost all budget and finance staff gone, what will you do to ensure the grants that are statutorily required through the *Older Americans Act* and the *Developmental Disabilities Act* are processed and grant recipients receive their appropriated funding in a timely manner?

Response: I will follow the law as it relates to grant-funding.

Question 27: With the planned reorganization of ACL into ACF, the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research will come under the authority of ACF. What are your research priorities for the Institute?

- Will you continue the Model Systems Program?
- Will you continue the Small Business Innovation Research Program?
- Will you continue the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center Program?
- Will you continue the Institute's Americans with Disabilities Act Regional Network?

Response: If confirmed, I will fulfill the legal obligations under applicable laws and continue to find ways to advance flexibilities and efficiencies in programs impacting the disability community.

Question 28: The National Network of University Centers on Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDDs) is authorized under the DD Act. Their core funding is administered by ACL. Currently, there are 68 UCEDDs—at least one in every US state and territory—that are in a unique position to facilitate the flow of disability-related information to States and communities. Centers work with people with disabilities, members of their families, state and local government agencies, and community providers in projects that provide training, technical assistance, service, research, and information sharing, with a focus on building the capacity of communities to support all residents with disabilities. UCEDDs help States and local communities implement services such as early intervention for disabled infants and toddlers, specialized health care for disabled people of all ages, community-based services and supports, robust education and academic support for children with disabilities, support for disabled people to work, and accessible housing and transportation. Following the reorganization of ACL into ACF, what steps will you take to ensure that UCEDDs are still able to carry out their statutorily defined work and functions?

Response: If confirmed, I will work to ensure that staffing levels are appropriate to ensure vital functions of the agency are continued.

Question 29: Given the strong statements from the Secretary related to autism spectrum disorder, what efforts will ACF prioritize to address the needs of autistic people and their families? How will you involve people with autism to determine those priorities?

Response: I support engaging with the those living with autism and their support network to identify areas of need.

Question 30: The Protection and Advocacy agencies support and protect the rights of disabled people in every state, territory, and Washington D.C. Will you commit to providing full funding to the portions of the Protection and Advocacy Agencies overseen by ACF to ensure their vital work continues?

Response: If confirmed, I will work to uphold the law and make best use of the resources provided by Congress.

Question 31: The Elder Justice Coordinating Council was established as part of the *Elder Justice Act of 2010*. Its work began in the Obama Administration with biannual meetings continuing in the first Trump Administration and the Biden Administration. ACL serves as the convenor of the EJCC which includes 17 agencies. The EJCC has not yet convened in the second Trump Administration. Can you assure the Committee that when aging programs come under your jurisdiction in ACF you will continue the work of the EJCC and convene regular meetings?

Response: I support efforts to curtail elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation, and, if confirmed, look forward to working with our interagency partners to address these issues.

Question 32: As you know, earlier this year ACF eliminated 5 of 10 Regional Offices as part of the HHS Reduction of Force (RIF) plans. Staff working in these regional offices were a critical source of guidance and support to state and local officials seeking to effectively deliver programs. As Assistant Secretary, what actions will you take to ensure that state and local leaders can get the compliance and implementation support they need now that their liaisons are gone and regional capacity is half of what it used to be?

Response: If confirmed, I will work to ensure that staffing levels are appropriate to ensure vital functions of the agency are continued.

Question 33: The State Department's human trafficking office [was gutted](#) in the RIF announced earlier this month. That makes ACF's Office of Trafficking in Persons an even more vital resource to protect vulnerable Americans. If confirmed, what will you do to ensure the federal government doesn't backslide on its commitment to prevent human trafficking and support those who have been trafficked?

Response: Issues related to public safety such as human trafficking are a high priority for the Administration. If confirmed, I will work diligently to prevent the scourge of human trafficking—and aid those victims who have suffered grievously from this terrible abuse.

Question 34: As you know, HHS has proposed eliminating the Low Income Home Energy Program (LIHEAP) program, which helps 6 million households heat and cool their homes every year. At an Appropriations Committee Hearing in May, Kennedy [explained this](#) cut by saying President Trump's energy policies will lower energy costs. These savings have not yet materialized. If confirmed, would you support keeping this program and look at ways to tie funding to changing energy costs instead?

Response: If confirmed, I will work to uphold the law and responsibly steward funds appropriated by Congress.

Office of Refugee Resettlement

Question 35: Many children languish for weeks, months, or even years in overly restrictive ORR custody settings while they wait for placements with relatives or in more appropriate community placements. Bipartisan legislation supports ensuring that children in custody are held in the least restrictive setting possible. Since January 2025, according to HHS data, the length of stay of children in HHS custody has increased over 400 percent, from about 35 days to 191 days (as of May) for children discharged from HHS custody.

- Is ORR a child welfare agency?
- If asked to lend ORR capacity, resources, or data to immigration enforcement activities, what will you consider in evaluating the request?
- Will you commit to limiting the time unaccompanied children spend in federal custody by ensuring unaccompanied children are more timely reunified with family or appropriate adults or, for children without reunification options, placed into appropriate long-term foster care or community placements?

Response: Safeguarding children, especially those in HHS custody, should remain a primary responsibility for ORR. A child welfare principle I will apply in this role is safety first, because safe and timely release must promote public safety and must ensure that sponsors are able to provide for the well-being of children, and I look forward to understanding and potentially building on the reforms Secretary Kennedy has made to improve sponsor vetting in ORR.

Question 36: This Committee has investigated and made findings concerning the harm that children have suffered to their health and well-being while in HHS custody and RTFs, including significant health and mental health concerns.

- Do you acknowledge that child welfare best-practices recognize the harms all children suffer when separated from family and community for prolonged periods?
- Will you commit to ensuring ORR provides high quality care and services to children in custody?
- Will you ensure that independent medical providers including pediatricians and mental health experts may enter into facilities where unaccompanied children are in custody, including shelters, secure and staff secure facilities, influx or emergency facilities, unlicensed facilities, and RTFs, to evaluate children's health and wellness?

Response: I support ORR efforts to provide safe, appropriate, and quality care while in HHS custody.

Question 37: Reporting has indicated that ORR began allowing Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) access to the Unaccompanied Children Database (UC Database) as early as February of this year. The UC Database is ORR's system of record and contains detailed and historical information on children who are or have been in ORR's custody and their sponsors. Ranking Member Wyden has sent two separate letters regarding this reporting, seeking detailed information on data exchange between ORR and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) / ICE.

- If confirmed, do you commit to providing Ranking Member Wyden with a full and timely response to his May 13, 2025 letter regarding ORR information sharing?
- Do you commit to immediately and fully evaluating any information sharing ORR is engaged in for lawfulness and adherence to child welfare best practices?

Response: I support timely responses to correspondence from our Congressional partners and will work towards efforts that ensure the safety and well-being of those children in ORR custody. I will follow all applicable laws related to data privacy.

Elder Care

Question 38: What will you do to ensure that older Americans and the programs that support them receive the attention of ACF commensurate with their present numbers, the dramatic demographic growth over the next decade, and the very real need for the broad array of services this population needs?

- How will you ensure the statutory role of the Assistant Secretary of Aging is fulfilled?

Response: Should ACF assume responsibilities of ACL in the proposed reorganization, I will work to fulfill all our legal obligations.

Question 39: What specific steps will you take to support the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, which makes sure ombudsmen regularly visit nursing homes and assisted living facilities to resolve the complaints and concerns of older adults and people with disabilities?

Question 40: The presence of an active LTCOP can enhance transparency and accountability within LTC facilities. This proactive advocacy can reduce the need for more frequent government oversight and investigations into individual facilities, leading to cost savings for federal and state agencies. Do you support this cost-saving approach?

Response: Response to 39 and 40: If confirmed, I commit to reviewing this program. I look forward to working with you to review ideas to ensure these programs are fulfilling their mission.

Medicaid

Question 41: What steps will you take to ensure that children with significant behavioral health needs receive timely and appropriate Medicaid-funded services, especially in light of the CBO projected \$1 trillion Medicaid cuts in the recently passed reconciliation bill?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Administrator for the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to address these needs.

Supporting Tribal Children, Families, and Communities

Question 42: The ACF's Administration for Native Americans (ANA) plays a key part in ensuring the agency meets its obligations to Native children and families, including being the primary source of federal support via grant opportunities for Native language revitalization. If confirmed, will you commit to preserving this office and its staff?

Response: Secretary Kennedy has made a strong commitment in support American Indians and Alaska Natives. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing the work of this program.

Question 43: The Tribal Engagement Team within the Commissioner's office of the Administration for Children, Youth and Families (ACYF) supports HHS and ACYF, leading Tribal engagement across the Children's Bureau and Family and Youth Services Bureau. Will you commit to maintaining this Team?

Response: Secretary Kennedy has made a strong commitment in support American Indians and Alaska Natives. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting that commitment.

Question 44: The ACF houses the Children's Bureau (CB), which plays a key role in implementing the *Indian Child Welfare Act* (ICWA). One of the Bureau's vital roles is providing guidance on implementing ICWA, monitoring child welfare programs, and offering technical

assistance to States and Tribes to improve child welfare systems. If confirmed, can you commit to fulfilling these roles not just to States, but also to Tribes to strengthen Native families?

Response: If confirmed, I commit to ensuring that native families have access to child welfare programs. I have worked closely with tribes in my Idaho roles, and I am grateful to have earned letters of support from three tribes.

Question 45: Given the recent appointment of a new Native Senior Advisor to the Secretary, how do you plan to work with the Secretary's office to ensure the needs of Native children and families are met?

Response: Secretary Kennedy has made a strong commitment in support American Indians and Alaska Natives. If confirmed, I will work the Secretary's office and Department partners to honor this commitment.

Question 46: Many of ACF's 43 forecasted FY25 grant notices ("NOFOs") [have not been issued](#), risking that money appropriated for this year may not be awarded. This includes programs such as shelters for runaway and homeless youth and an Ingenious-specific domestic violence hotline. If confirmed, what actions will you take to ensure this money is appropriated as Congress intended and goes to the children and families who benefit from it?

- Would you consider supplements to existing grantees to ensure the money doesn't go back to the Treasury?

Response: If confirmed, I will uphold the law and responsibly steward funds appropriated by Congress.

Question 48: Within the first few years after the prior Trump Administration policy change on legal rep, we saw an enormous response from States that sought to partner with the federal government in using IV-E matching funds to support counsel for parents and children.

- Are there any additional components of child welfare legal work that you would like to see the Administration build out further to continue to partner with States and Tribes in the legal representation space in the coming years?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to assessing needs and working to advance appropriate legal services where needed.

Additional Questions

Question 49: Testifying before the Idaho Senate's Health and Welfare Committee, you declared your commitment to shifting foster parent home inspection follow-up visits onto Zoom. "Oftentimes, when you do a home study, there's things that are flagged," you stated, "I don't want to be the leg where I have to send somebody out and wait three weeks to go to their house

and inspect.”⁴ You also stated that the Department was “open to” further deregulation efforts, seemingly referencing Senate Bill 1034, which later became law, that removed the requirement that foster parents keep firearms unloaded and in a locked container.

- If there is evidence that a foster youth has experienced an unsafe placement, does it require an in-person visit to assess the youth’s safety and home conditions?

Response: Yes, this is the practice in Idaho.

- Under your leadership, did Idaho’s Health and Welfare Department conduct any home-inspection follow-up visits remotely using technology, such as Zoom? If so, please list the specific protocol changes the Department adopted.

Response: No changes have been made. The statement referenced above was a theoretical example of how all divisions in the agency, including IT, were attempting to help the Department achieve its goal of improving child welfare outcomes.

- Did you advocate for, support, or otherwise contribute to, the passage of Idaho Senate Bill 1034?

Response: The Department did not engage in this bill, other than providing a technical review as it does on dozens of bills annually. This Bill was a reaction to the Department’s rules, which were based off of national model licensing rules. The Legislature found a provision it did not agree with and overruled the Department’s rules through legislative action (see Section 3 of the bill).

Question 50: Earlier this year, you stated that, under your leadership, Idaho’s Department of Health and Welfare had begun “b[uying] out movie theaters” to screen a “faith-based movie” about foster care.⁵ Analogizing this approach to tactics used by military recruiters, you labelled religious families your key “target” for recruitment.

- Do you believe it is appropriate for the government to buy out movie theaters to screen “faith-based” films?

Response: In Idaho, the Department provided funding to a non-profit entity who hosted an event to help recruit foster families. As part of a comprehensive diligent recruitment plan, I am supportive of state efforts to broadly recruit qualified foster families as a means of reducing placement in congregate care or other non-ideal settings that result in safe, appropriate, and loving homes for every youth in the foster system.

⁴ Idaho State Senate Health and Welfare Committee Meeting, (Jan. 29, 2025)
<https://iso.legislature.idaho.gov/MediaArchive/ShowMediaByCommittee.do>

⁵ *Id*; Angel Studios, “DailyWire+ and Angel Studios Strike Deal for ‘Sound of Hope,’” (June 14, 2024)
<https://www.angel.com/press/release/dailywire-and-angel-studios-strike-deal-for-sound-of-hope>

- If confirmed, what efforts will you make to reach out to potential foster families of all demographics?

Response: If confirmed, I will work with states to try to find a safe, appropriate, and loving home for every youth in the foster system.

Questions for the Record submitted to Alex Adams from Senator Maria Cantwell.

Medicaid/Vaccines

Congressional Republicans voted this month to strip affordable health care from over 15 million people across the country, including from over 300,000 people in Washington state. Of the people in my home state who will lose health insurance, nearly two-thirds are on Medicaid. I know the position you are nominated for does not directly oversee Medicaid, but if confirmed, you will be directly responsible for the well-being of all children and families in the country.

It is an understatement that the Medicaid program is critical to the health of children. To put that into perspective, Medicaid provides access to lifesaving care for 37 million children, including 47 percent of kids in Washington state. Medicaid also covers 7 million kids with disabilities and special health care needs, and 41 percent of all childbirths.

Now, the programs that children and families relied on are at serious risk because of misguided policies that take away health care from Americans to pay for tax cuts for big corporations and billionaires. These families will have nowhere to turn to when they need care, or they will be forced to seek care at emergency departments, which is ten times more expensive than a regular visit to a physician's office.

QUESTIONS:

Mr. Adams -

1. Do you recognize that Medicaid is essential for the health of kids and families in the United States?
 - a) If so, what would you do at ACF to protect kids and families from the recent legislation that will strip health care from over 15 million people?

Response: I look forward to working with Congress and CMS to ensure ACF programs are closely coordinated and well-integrated with CMS, where appropriate.

Medicaid also pays for programs like Vaccines for Children, which provides vaccines that are recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) free of charge. This is critical considering the resurgence of measles. As of today, there have been 10 confirmed cases of measles in Washington state, which is unacceptable for a disease that was considered eradicated in the United States in 2000.

2. Do you support childhood vaccinations and the ability for children and families to access vaccines?
3. Have you personally ever fired an entire unit of staff in your agency with little to no explanation?
4. Do you agree that Secretary Kennedy's firing of all 17 members of ACIP will harm public health and erode the scientific expertise in the government?

Response 2-4: I believe vaccines save lives and are an important part of our public health strategy, and I support the Secretary's desire to let the science dictate public policy on vaccines.

Need for Federal Housing Funding

In your written testimony you said you "bring a state view to federal policymaking at a time when President Trump has called for a renewed commitment to federalism." As you know, the programs under your jurisdiction are supposed to promote the economic and social well-being of children, individuals, families, and communities.

As part of President Trump's so-called "skinny" budget proposal for fiscal year 2026, sent to Congress on May 2, 2025, HUD rental assistance programs would be replaced with a state-administered block grant and a two-year time limit on how long someone could receive rental assistance would be imposed.

A study done by New York University's Housing Lab found that two-year time limits, if applied to current work-able households, would cause almost 1.4 million Section 8 households and public housing households to lose their rental subsidy.

QUESTIONS:

Mr. Adams –

1. If the loss of these HUD rental subsidies does increase the number of people who are homeless, how would you prepare the Administration for Children and Families to be ready for this likely increase in those needed the services that ACF programs provide?
2. Given that the ACF programs under the agency you are nominated to lead are largely funded through block grants to the states, are you going to advocate within the Administration and to the Congress that these programs are adequately funded to meet the anticipated needs?
3. What would be your strategy to help states deal with an increase in the homeless population if adequate federal funds are not provided?

Response 1-3: I defer to the Department of Housing and Urban Development on rental assistance programs. Any time there is a change of funding streams, I will do everything in my power to ensure functions in ACF continue seamlessly.

Reducing Youth Homelessness

Mr. Adams, there are 4.2 million youth experiencing homelessness in rural, suburban, and urban communities.

States like Washington are showing that we can make massive progress in reducing youth homelessness – in our case a 40 percent reduction – by implementing effective, data-driven strategies that maximize limited private, local, state, and federal dollars.

These solutions are especially important because we know that about one-half of adults who experience homelessness first experienced homelessness when they were young.

QUESTIONS:

Mr. Adams -

1. Do you believe the federal government should be a partner in implementing proven strategies for preventing and reducing youth homelessness – and therefore ultimately reducing adult homelessness?
2. Do you have a strategy that can build on the gains we are seeing in places like Washington state?
3. Will you commit to meeting with community leaders from around the country who are on the frontlines of preventing youth homelessness so they can share their success stories and find ways to work with you to continue this important work?

Response 1-3: If confirmed, I will work to strengthen the Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs, which can help address endemic homelessness. If responding to homelessness overlaps further with my duties at ACF, I look forward to working with relevant stakeholders to reduce this societal problem and increase public safety.

Head Start

Mr. Adams, if confirmed, you will be in charge of the ACF and responsible for overseeing the Head Start program, which offers vital support to working families and children by providing high-quality childcare, early childhood education, and comprehensive health and social services.

Head Start serves nearly 800,000 young children every year, including 15,000 in Washington state. This program is a critical source of childcare for working families, particularly in rural and Tribal communities, where Head Start programs may be the only option for high-quality childcare. Earlier this year, the Trump administration closed half of the Head Start regional offices across the country, including the one in Seattle, and withheld nearly \$1 billion in federal grant funding for Head Start programs.

Due to these funding delays and lack of certainty about regional support staff, a Head Start provider in central Washington was forced to close temporarily, leaving 400 children without childcare in the interim.

While the President's budget request called for level funding to the Head Start program, any further funding delays leave tens of thousands of children and families, who you will be in charge of supporting, without this essential program.

QUESTIONS:

Mr. Adams -

1. Do you believe that the Head Start program is an essential tool to support children and families across the country?
2. Will you work to ensure that Head Start is adequately funded, appropriately staffed, and that federal grant funding is delivered in a timely manner?
3. What will you do in your role to ensure that children maintain access to high-quality childcare and early childhood education options like Head Start?

Response 1-3: I agree with the Secretary's desire to make Head Start better and brighter, and I will work to diligently to ensure that happens.

Questions for the Record submitted to Alex Adams from Senator Whitehouse.

Question 1:

Rhode Island's Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) had relied on Administration for Children and Families (ACF) staff in the Boston regional office for critical program and grant support for their child welfare work. This year, their inquiries have been redirected from the Boston regional office, and their new points of contact are overwhelmed with inquiries and requests for guidance.

- A) Please share the number of ACF employees assigned to the Boston regional office in January 2025 and the number of employees in July 2025.
- B) For those employees no longer at this regional office, how have their responsibilities been re-assigned within ACF?
- C) If confirmed, how will you ensure states can obtain timely guidance from ACF?

Response: If confirmed, I will work to ensure that staffing levels are appropriate to provide timely guidance and support to ACF grantees. As the nominee, I am not privy to the changes in staffing that have taken place in the Boston regional office of ACF.

Question 2:

Rhode Island's Office of Healthy Aging (OHA) runs several programs funded through the Administration for Community Living (ACL). OHA has experienced a similar lack of communication from ACL regarding structural and staffing changes.

- A) Please share the number of ACL employees assigned to the Boston regional office in January 2025 and the total number of employees as of July 2025.
- B) For those employees no longer at this regional office, how have their responsibilities been re-assigned within ACL?
- C) If confirmed, how will you ensure states can obtain timely guidance from ACL?

Response: If confirmed, I will work to ensure that staffing levels are appropriate to provide timely guidance and support to ACF grantees. As the nominee, I am not privy to the changes in staffing that have taken place in the Boston regional office of ACL.

Question 3:

More than 2.4 million children are being raised by grandparents and other relatives across the country, the vast majority of which are outside of the foster care system. Research indicates that children raised by kin have better outcomes than those raised by unrelated foster parents, yet support for kinship caregivers remains limited.

- A) If confirmed, how will you work to expand federal support for kinship care?

Response: Kinship caregivers play a critical role in providing healthy family environments for children. Kinship care is the next best option compared to a foster youth's safe reunification with their biological parents. In Idaho, I prioritized kinship care and adopted kin-specific licensing rules that took effect on July 1st.

Questions for the Record submitted to Alex Adams from Senator Warren.

Question 1: As Assistant Secretary, you will work closely with Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., advising him on issues affecting children and families. Your job is to ensure that the Secretary makes informed decisions that advance child welfare. In March 2025, HHS Secretary Kennedy announced his plans to [“overhaul” HHS—restructuring agencies like ACF—in an attempt to “reduce\[\] bureaucratic sprawl.”](#) Secretary Kennedy then launched widespread layoffs at HHS, resulting in ACF's staff shrinking by [around 35 to 40 percent](#). ACF fired approximately [500 civil servants and closed half of its regional offices](#).

- a. Do you support Secretary Kennedy's widespread terminations at HHS even as they severely disrupt ACF's services?

- b. Will you impose any further staff cuts at ACF, unless Congress specifically approves these cuts?

Response: I support the Secretary's vision and roadmap for finding efficiency in HHS programs and yielding better outcomes for those we serve.

Question 2: Regional offices are essential for ACF to function. In addition to reviewing and [approving cost allocation plans](#), these offices provide grantees with [specialized technical support](#). Without them, grantees face heightened administrative burdens with little agency support, leading to funding delays and service interruptions. Even more alarming, closing regional offices [inhibits the allocation of Congressional funds](#) to the states and [undermines reimbursements](#) for funding that is spread over multiple programs.

- a. How will you monitor the impact of regional office closures and staff cuts on the delivery of ACF grants and services?
- b. The fallout from these closures and layoffs is already being felt. In fact, [backlogs in grants have become so large](#) that HHS has asked laid-off employees to temporarily return to work to help manage grants. What is your plan to address the funding disruptions grantees experienced as a result of regional office closures?
- c. Given their essential function in administering Congressional funding to states, do you commit to maintaining and reopening ACF's regional offices?
- d. How do you intend on meeting funding deadlines if you make further staff reductions and close more regional offices at ACF?

Response a-d: If confirmed, I will work to ensure that staffing levels are appropriate to provide timely guidance and support to grantees.

Question 3: You have [supported](#) the Trump Administration and the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE)'s agency reorganization. In addition to slashing ACF's staff and closing regional offices, DOGE has [accessed](#) ACF databases, compromising the privacy of grantees and recipients of ACF.

- a. Which ACF systems and databases has already DOGE accessed, and will you allow DOGE to further access any additional systems and programs to carry out terminations or for any other reason?
- b. If you will allow DOGE access to ACF's systems—or if they DOGE-affiliated personnel have already obtained such access—how will you protect families' data privacy, including ensuring that data is not shared with other agencies or outside entities?
- c. Do you commit to putting well-being of children and families first by protecting their data privacy, even if it means disagreeing with DOGE and Secretary Kennedy's vision?

Response: As a nominee, I am not privy to DOGE's action. If confirmed, I commit to upholding all applicable laws protecting privacy. To clarify, the linked Tweet above refers to an Idaho state legislative bill, not any federal action. The Idaho bill eliminated obsolete provisions of Idaho Code (e.g., committees that have not met since the late 1960's).

Question 4: ACF's [stated vision](#) is "children, youth, families, individuals and communities who are resilient, safe, healthy, and economically secure."

- a. How do you intend on ensuring children, youth, families, individuals, and communities are economically secure in the wake of the agency's widespread layoffs and disrupted grants and payments, and how will you continue to foster economic security if you make further terminations?
- b. How do you intend to promote resiliency, safety, and health among children, youth, families, individuals, and communities, if you make further terminations?

Response: If confirmed, I will work to ensure that staffing levels are appropriate to provide timely guidance and support to grantees.

Question 5: ACF's [stated mission](#) is "to foster health and well-being by providing federal leadership, partnership and resources for the compassionate and effective delivery of human services."

- a. What is your strategy for fostering partnership and providing resources at ACF to ensure the compassionate and effective delivery of human services?
- b. What is your vision for how you will provide federal leadership in this role, and what are your goals for when working with HHS leadership?

Response: As I mentioned in my testimony, I believe federal policy should seek to empower, not diminish, state and tribal governments to meet the unique needs of their communities, and I believe federal policy should strengthen, not supplant, parents' capacity to make the best decisions for their children. I will seek to provide states, tribal governments, and parents appropriate flexibility under the law.

Question 6: ACF houses the Office of Child Care (OCC), which [administers the Child Care and Development Fund](#) (CCDF). This fund has [multiple essential functions](#), such as setting minimum health and safety standards for the majority of child care, improving the quality of child care for all children, and providing low-income working families with child care assistance. Overall, approximately [1.4 million children](#) and [870,900 families](#) receive child care subsidies funded by CCDF every month. Around [225,000 child care providers](#) serve children who receive these subsidies. The Biden Administration improved this fund through a [March 2024 rule](#) that made child care options more accessible and affordable for low-income families, improved child care provider payments, and streamlined the process for families enrolling in child care subsidies. I am concerned that President Trump will overturn this rule without providing public notice or comment, which would [destabilize](#) an already fragile child care system.

- a. Do you commit to protecting the CCDF and the low-income families and child care providers that rely on it to receive and provide care?

- b. Will you advise the Trump Administration against overturning this rule in the interest of protecting low-income families from spikes in child care costs and preventing further strains on child care providers?
- c. How do you intend to reduce the hurdles for families if the final rule, which includes provisions aimed at lowering barriers for families—is overturned?
- d. How do you intend to encourage grants and contracts focused on building the supply of child care—especially in underserved areas—if provisions that alleviate administrative burdens to do so are eliminated?
- e. Legislators at the state level are [pushing to deregulate child care](#) to lower costs at the detriment of quality care. In combination with overturning the CCDF final rule, these actions would exacerbate provider shortages and reduce the quality of care, making the nation’s child care crisis even more acute. How do you intend to prevent shortages in child care providers—without compromising the quality of care—and lower child care costs in the absence of this final rule?
- f. You are a proponent of [“zero-based regulation,”](#) a deregulation strategy that advocates for removing any regulation deemed “obsolete, outdated, or unnecessary.” Under your leadership at Idaho’s Department of Health and Welfare, Idaho [deregulated child care](#) and loosened child-to-staff ratio standards. How do you intend to protect the quality of child care if you loosen regulations around child care providers and subsidies?

Response a-f: If confirmed, I commit to reviewing this final rule. I also look forward to reviewing the CCDF program and making assessments based on needs and available resources. I believe that the CCDF is an appropriately structured program in that it sets minimum requirements (e.g., each state must have a maximum group size), but then entrusts states to set these actual parameters, reflecting the unique needs of their communities. If confirmed, I will seek to continue to provide states maximum flexibility within the law, while providing available research and technical assistance to empower states to make the best decisions for their unique needs.

Question 7: Do you commit to reducing administrative hurdles for families applying for CCDF subsidies?

Response: One of my primary objectives in pursuing this position is to find areas where we can increase efficiency and build a better federal partnership.

Question 8: Head Start, another program you would oversee if confirmed, is a [major provider of early childhood education](#), especially for those in rural and tribal communities where it may be the only option available. Head Start is [broadly effective](#), helping children long after they leave the program.

- a. Do you commit to protecting Head Start from proposals that seek to render it ineffective by drastically reducing its budget or otherwise seeking to eliminate it entirely?

Response: If confirmed, I will share Secretary Kennedy’s objective to make Head Start program better and brighter.

Question 9: Head Start grantees—and the families these grantees serve—are [facing snowballing problems](#) due to unexpected regional ACF office closures. Office closures mean delays in funding for grantees, putting Head Start programs at grave risk of closure. The uncertain fate of Head Start programs will leave thousands of families scrambling to suddenly navigate uncertain child care plans. At the same time, the Trump Administration has [initiated countless administrative hurdles](#) for Head Start grantees and has expressed interest in cutting the program entirely. What immediate steps will you take to ensure that Head Start grantees receive the funds they are owed, in a timely fashion, to keep their programs open?

Response: If confirmed, I will work to ensure that staffing levels are appropriate to provide proper oversight and timely distribution of allocated funding.

Question 10: How will you maintain open lines of communication with Head Start grantees about the timeline and status of their grant applications, as well as promptly inform them in a timely manner whenever there may be service disruptions, especially in the wake of large-scale terminations at ACF?

Response: If confirmed, I will ensure that we maintain appropriate lines of communication and support for our grantees.

Question 11: HHS [recently rescinded](#) an interpretation of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), reclassifying programs—including Head Start—in a manner that makes them unavailable to undocumented children. This decision [punishes undocumented children](#) by stripping them of access to critical early childhood education and development programs.

- a. Do you agree with Secretary Kennedy’s decision to block undocumented children from participating in programs like Head Start?
- b. Will you ensure that the implementation of this policy does not create problems—such as burdensome proof of citizenship requirements—for qualifying citizen families?

Response a-b. I agree with President Trump and Secretary Kennedy that taxpayer money and benefits should serve American citizens. I will also work to ensure that families face as few barriers as possible to access ACF programs—while maintaining adequate safeguards to ensure programs are serving intended populations.

Question 12: Secretary Kennedy has also made disturbing comments about children with disabilities, saying in a [press conference](#) that autistic kids “will never pay taxes. They’ll never hold a job. They’ll never play baseball. They’ll never write a poem. They’ll never go out on a

date. Many of them will never use a toilet unassisted.” As Assistant Secretary, you will be making decisions about programs that impact children with disabilities, including Head Start, which [requires](#) at least 10 percent of its “slots be occupied by children with disabilities.”

1. Do you agree with Secretary Kennedy’s statement?
2. Do you believe this view of children with disabilities that Secretary Kennedy has advanced is consistent with ACF’s mission and values?

Response 1-2: Individuals with autism exist on a spectrum, and Secretary Kennedy was clearly talking about individuals with severe autism. I am confident Secretary Kennedy supports ACF’s mission and values.

Question 13: Part of Secretary Kennedy’s reorganization of HHS is a [proposal](#) to integrate some “critical programs that support older adults and people with disabilities” from the Administration for Community Living (ACL) into ACF. ACL [programs](#) “focus on everything from accessible transportation to alternatives to guardianship, respite care, improving home and community-based services and enhancing the direct care workforce.” If confirmed, these critical ACL programs impacting older adults and people with disabilities would fall under your purview. ACL’s stated mission is “maximize the independence, well-being, and health of older adults, people with disabilities across the lifespan, and their families and caregivers.” What is your strategy for ensuring that ACL’s programs deliver on this mission and provide people with disabilities and older adults high quality care?

Response: Should ACF assume responsibilities of ACL in the proposed reorganization, I will work to fulfill our legal obligations and advance the mission outlined in the Older Americans Act and other applicable laws.

Question 14: In a [letter to Congress](#), over 450 disability advocacy groups voiced concern about the impact that breaking up ACL would have on its vital programs. Alison Barkoff, who formerly led ACL, [says](#) these haphazard changes “will impact the ability of ACL to get funding out for critical services, to provide technical assistance to grantees, and to help shape policies that impact people with disabilities.”

- a. What steps will you take to ensure ACL’s programs are not disrupted due to funding delays and that the care these programs provide people with disabilities and older adults remains uninterrupted?
- b. How do you intend to ensure the timely delivery of funding to ACL programs amidst the agency’s consolidation and widespread layoffs?

Response a-b: If confirmed, I will work to ensure proper oversight and timely distribution of allocated funding.

Question 15: Recently, the Department of Justice (DOJ) notified your state, Idaho, that it violated Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In its [letter to the state](#), the DOJ said the state administered “its long-term care system in a way that unnecessarily segregates individuals with physical disabilities in nursing facilities and places others at serious risk of such unnecessary segregation.”

- a. Do you agree with the DOJ’s findings? The Department continues to constructively engage with DOJ to ensure that the underlying data used to generate the findings properly took into account all recent state actions, including record investments in Home and Community-Based Services.
- b. If confirmed, what steps will you take to prevent these problems from occurring within the residential programs that ACL oversees?
- c. One of the responsibilities of Assistant Secretary is to ensure effective implementation of the agency’s programs. How do you plan on using ACF’s tools to prevent negligence and ADA violations in residential programs?

Response: If confirmed, I will follow the law and make use of available resources to uphold program efficacy and ensure mission integrity.

Question 16: The Supreme Court’s [decision](#) in *Olmstead v. L.C.* (1999) set a legal requirement that public entities must administer services “in the most integrated setting appropriate to the needs of... individuals with disabilities.” In a meeting with congressional staff, you said you were unfamiliar with this case. What is your understanding of the case now, and how will you ensure ACL programs uphold this precedent?

Response: I am aware of the case and discussed it with Senate Finance staff. If confirmed, I will follow the law and uphold all legal obligations.

Question 17: As Assistant Secretary, you would [oversee](#) the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), serving the welfare needs of unaccompanied minors—some of most vulnerable children that the government cares for. ORR [provides](#) these children “with equitable, high-quality services and resources so they can maximize their potential.” But the [Trump Administration seeks](#) to turn ORR into “another enforcement arm for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE),” centering the office’s work on “enforcement goals rather than children’s well-being.” For example, President Trump has [enforced new sponsor “vetting” requirements](#)—including providing U.S. identification, “imposing DNA testing [and providing] proof of income... before children can be released to their family or trusted adults”—which has [nearly tripled the time](#) children spend in federal custody. Families are “being systematically [set up to fail](#),” and this prolonged period subverts ORR’s [mandate](#) of providing children care in the “least restrictive setting that is in the best interests of the child.”

- a. Do you agree with President Trump’s new sponsor requirements at ORR?
- b. Do you believe that the extended time unaccompanied minors are spending in federal custody is the least restrictive setting that is in the best interest of the child?

Response: Safeguarding children, especially those in HHS custody, is a primary responsibility of ORR. A child welfare principle I will apply in this role is safety first, because safe and timely release must promote public safety and must ensure that sponsors are able to provide for the well-being of children, and I look forward to understanding and potentially building on the reforms Secretary Kennedy has made to improve sponsor vetting in ORR.

Question 18: Do you believe that undocumented children and unaccompanied minors deserve lower-grade child care—or no care at all—compared to other children in the U.S.?

Response: I believe we should provide appropriate and compassionate care tailored to the unique needs of the children in HHS custody.

Question 19: ORR’s [mission](#) is to provide “equitable, high-quality services and resources so [children] can maximize their potential.” If confirmed, you will be responsible for ensuring this care is delivered. Do you commit to ensuring that children ORR has traditionally protected continue to receive the same quality of care and resources as other children served by ACF?

Response: I believe we should provide appropriate and compassionate care tailored to the unique needs of the children in HHS custody.

Question 20: The Trump Administration has [granted ICE and DOGE access](#) to ORR’s Unaccompanied Children Portal, which is a [database](#) of unaccompanied minors who have entered the U.S. This access exposes vulnerable children’s personal data to agencies currently pursuing agendas that harm immigrant children and families.

- a. Will you prevent outside agencies, such as ICE and DOGE, from accessing the personal information of all children served by ACF?
- b. Will you commit to stripping ICE and DOGE of their access to ORR’s database and re-centering the office’s [mission](#) to its original goal of providing all children—regardless of immigration status—with “equitable, high-quality services and resources” that maximize potential?

Response a-b: If confirmed, I will follow the law and uphold any applicable legal obligations related to privacy and the welfare of children in HHS custody.

Question 21: Do you believe that HHS personnel should be protected from any form of retaliation for coming forward about an illegal order, sexual assault or harassment, negligence, misconduct, or any other concern that they wish to raise?

Response: If confirmed, I will support the law and uphold whistleblower protections.

Question 22: Have you ever retaliated against any individual for coming forward about an illegal order, sexual assault or harassment, negligence, misconduct, or any other concern that they wish to raise?

Response: No.

Question 23: If you are confirmed, will you commit to protecting whistleblowers? If so, please specify how you will do so.

Response: If confirmed, I will support the law and uphold whistleblower protections.

Question 24: If you are confirmed, will you commit to preventing retaliation against any individual for coming forward about an illegal order, sexual assault or harassment, negligence, misconduct, or any other concern that they wish to raise?

Response: Yes.

Question 25: Will you ensure your staff complies with any Inspector General or Government Accountability Office deadlines established for requested communications, documents, and witnesses, and that staff will be protected from reprisal for their testimony?

Response: If confirmed, I will follow the law and uphold any applicable legal obligations. I will seek to provide timely responses as well to these bodies.

Questions for the Record submitted to Alex Adams from Senator Sanders.

1. Do you support Secretary Kennedy's proposal to eliminate the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)?

Response: If confirmed, I will work to uphold the law and responsibly steward funds appropriated by Congress.

2. Do you commit to following the law and administering funding appropriated by Congress for all ACF programs in a timely manner?

Response: I commit to following the law regarding appropriations.

3. Do you support policies to ensure no family pays more than 7 percent of their income on child care?

Response: I support efforts to make child care more viable and affordable for working families.

4. Will you commit to fully implementing the HHS rules on the Child Care and Development Fund finalized in 2024 – Improving Child Care Access, Affordability, and Stability in the Child Care and Development Fund? What will you do to ensure more families have access to high-quality, affordable child care options?

Response: If confirmed, I commit to reviewing this final rule. My understanding is all states or *nearly* all states have requested a waiver from some or all of these rule changes. If confirmed I will review these rules with states and other stakeholders to determine if they are working as intended.

5. Dr. Adams, the Trump Administration delayed sending Child Care and Development Block Grant funds by two and a half months, when the process usually takes a few weeks. Please explain what you will do in your capacity to ensure no delays or withholding of child care funding.

Response: If confirmed, I will follow the law.

6. If confirmed, how will you ensure that federal child care and family assistance funds, including the Child Care and Development Block Grant, remain focused on supporting high-quality child care options for working families?

Response: I support efforts to make child care more viable and affordable for working families.

7. Dr. Adams, you assured the Finance Committee that you support the federal Head Start program. What will you do to ensure Head Start programs across the country do not experience delays in grant awards and additional, arbitrary requirements to draw down federal funding?

Response: If confirmed, I will follow the law.

8. Dr. Adams, you stated during your confirmation hearing that you support Secretary Kennedy's vision to make Head Start "better and brighter." What does this mean to you?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to assessing the needs of the Head Start program, providing proper oversight, and developing clear guidance for the program—all while making the program an excellent way for children to learn the skills they need to thrive during their subsequent education.

9. How many staff are left in the central Office of Head Start?

Response: As a nominee, I am not privy to this information.

10. Please provide your plans for supporting the hundreds of Head Start grantees in the 22 states who lost their regional offices, particularly to address the funding delays and lack of communication to grantees.

Response: I will work to ensure timely communication with grantees.

11. Will you commit to fully implementing the HHS rules on Head Start finalized in 2024 – Supporting the Head Start Workforce and Consistent Quality Programming?

Response: I will follow the law and any applicable rules and regulations.

12. Dr. Adams, do you believe that family integrity is central to a child's wellbeing?

Response: Yes.

13. Dr. Adams, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act requires that any unaccompanied child in HHS custody be, "promptly placed in the least restrictive setting that is in the best interest of the child." Yet we're seeing children experience record-setting lengths in custody. There is extensive reporting on how devastating this can be to a child's development and overall wellbeing. How do you intend to address the issues of prompt placement for the child's best interest, and do you believe that additional onerous requirement for-sponsor vetting that have unnecessarily prolonged UAC time spent in ORR care uphold Congressional intent?

Response: Safeguarding children, especially those in HHS custody, is a primary responsibility of ORR. A child welfare principle I will apply in this role is safety first, because safe and timely release must promote public safety and must ensure that sponsors are able to provide for the well-being of children, and I look forward to understanding and potentially building on the reforms Secretary Kennedy has made to improve sponsor vetting in ORR.

14. What are the basic safeguards for the treatment of immigrant children in federal custody provided by the *Flores* Settlement Agreement?

- a. Do you believe the illegal termination of funding for UAC legal services was in violation of this agreement?
- b. Do you believe reports that children in need of diabetes medication or other special services were denied those services are in violation of this agreement?
- c. Do you believe that increased sponsor-vetting procedures are in violation of this agreement?

- d. Do you believe that making it more difficult to report instances of abuse while in ORR care are in violation of this agreement?

Response 14a-d: I will follow the law and fulfill all legal obligations with respect to the care of children by ORR and work to ensure the well-being of children in HHS custody.

15. Dr. Adams, in the past you have advocated for “zero-based regulation” to cut regulations deemed unnecessary, overly restrictive, or lacking effectiveness. Do you believe that the additional onerous requirements for sponsor-vetting imposed by this administration that have extended the average length of stay for children in ORR custody could be classified as unnecessary, overly restrictive, or lacking effectiveness?

Response: Safeguarding children, especially those in HHS custody, should remain a primary responsibility for ORR. A child welfare principle I will apply in this role is safety first, because safe and timely release must promote public safety and must ensure that sponsors are able to provide for the well-being of children, and I look forward to understanding and potentially building on the reforms Secretary Kennedy has made to improve sponsor vetting in ORR.

16. Reports indicate that DOGE, DHS, and ICE have had unlawful access to the Unaccompanied Children Portal earlier this year. Non-essential access to children’s case files jeopardize the child welfare functions ORR was intended to serve and puts children at heightened risk for trafficking and exploitation.
 - a. What legal authority does HHS have to expand access to this database to immigration enforcement?
 - b. If confirmed, do you commit to briefing Congress on the extent to which DOGE had access to ACF’s data?
 - i. What information do ICE personnel have access to?
 - ii. How many ICE staff have access to the UC Portal?
 - c. Do you commit to following federal law and ensuring the data of children is not mishandled?

Response 16a-c: If confirmed, I will follow all applicable laws related to data privacy. I also commit to timely communications with Congress.

17. In H.R.1, there is a new provision that will require ORR staff to search UACs for “gang-related tattoos and other gang-related markings and covering such tattoos or markings.” You will be overseeing the implementation of this provision. How do you plan to implement these unprecedented new requirements and ensuring children are safe from harm?

Response: I will implement all laws related to ORR while protecting the safety and well-being of children in ORR custody.

18. Offices within Administration for Community Living (ACL) were authorized by law, including the Developmental Disabilities (DD) Act, which created the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AIDD) at ACL. The purpose of the DD Act is to “assure that individuals with developmental disabilities and their families participate in the design of and have access to needed community services, individualized supports, and other forms of assistance that promote self-determination, independence, productivity, and integration and inclusion in all facets of community life ...” The President’s budget proposes ACF will take on the role of administering disability programs. How will you engage the disability community to weigh in on changes to offices within ACL?

Response: If confirmed and should ACF assume responsibilities of ACL in the proposed reorganization, I look forward to engaging with both the disability and aging communities to ensure that we fulfill legal responsibilities related to ACL programs.

19. The President has previously said that HHS would administer all “special needs” programs. Do you believe all special education and related programs under the Department of Education should be transferred to ACF? Do you agree that a transfer of such programs required an act of Congress? Do you believe that the Department of Education should be abolished?

Response: I support the Secretary and this Administration on finding new ways reduce duplication and find efficiencies within HHS and across the federal government.

20. The Older Americans Act (OAA) provides a wide range of programs and services that help older adults remain active and contributing members of our families and our communities. Some of the services the OAA provides are home-delivered meals, long-term care ombudsman support, and assistance for caregivers. Each of these programs is funded primarily by federal dollars with very little administrative overhead. The President’s budget proposes ACF will take on the role of administering OAA programs. What will you do to prioritize the needs of a growing population of older Americans to ensure that there is adequate funding so that programs and services can reach older adults in need and their caregivers?

Response: Nutrition programs like those made available under OAA are important to Secretary Kennedy’s Make America Healthy Again strategy. If confirmed and should ACF assume responsibilities of ACL in the proposed reorganization, I look forward to continuing the mission of the Older Americans Act by allowing older Americans to age in place with dignity.

Questions for the Record submitted to Alex Adams from Senator Tina Smith.

Question 1: This Spring, Native health and child welfare organizations testified before the Indian Affairs Committee about how important Health and Human Services agencies like the Administration of Children and Families (ACF) are critical to ensuring the federal government fulfills its trust responsibilities to Tribes and the Native Hawaiian Community. With the recent closure of over half of HHS's regional offices, which were the primary point of contact for most Tribes for HHS program implementation in their regions, the remaining offices have few relationships with the majority of Tribes who were served by other regions. What is your plan to address this gap in service delivery and access for Tribes and the Native Hawaiian Community?

Response: If confirmed, I will work to ensure timely communications with grantees and our tribal partners.

Question 2: Will you commit to formal consultation with Tribes and the Native Hawaiian Community prior to implementing any changes to ACF programs?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with our tribal partners. I have worked closely with tribes in my Idaho roles, and I am grateful to have earned letters of support from three tribes.

Questions for the Record submitted to Alex Adams from Senator Warnock.

Question 1: Refugee resettlement has been tremendously successful and vital to communities across the country, including in Georgia, in part due to integration support like case management, English language or job training, and other services under the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) aimed at building self-sufficiency.

The FY 2026 budget proposal for ACF proposes zeroing out programs like Transitional and Medical Services (TAMS) and Refugee Support Services (RSS)⁶, which have supported lawfully present refugees and other discrete populations eligible for ORR support.

- If confirmed what is your vision for the Office of Refugee Resettlement under these proposed changes?
- If confirmed, how do you imagine zeroing out programs like TAMS and RSS will affect ACF's ability to support lawfully present refugees and other ORR-eligible populations?

Response: Safeguarding children, especially those in HHS custody, should remain a primary responsibility for ORR. A child welfare principle I will apply in this role is safety first, because safe and timely release must promote public safety and must ensure that sponsors are able to provide for the well-being of children, and I look forward to understanding and potentially building on the reforms Secretary Kennedy has made to improve sponsor vetting in ORR.

⁶ *Fiscal Year 2026 Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committee*, Department of Health and Human Services, <https://acf.gov/sites/default/files/documents/olab/ACF-FY-2026-CJ-for-web.pdf>.

Question 2: The One Big Beautiful Bill Act made refugees, asylees, and other ORR-eligible populations ineligible for SNAP, Medicare, and Medicaid.⁷

- How do you anticipate this policy change will affect the services ACF oversees for ORR-eligible populations?

Response: I support President Trump and Secretary Kennedy in their commitment to ensure American taxpayer money is spent on programs benefiting American citizens.

Question 3: The ACF budget justification for Fiscal Year 2026 states, “The U.S. will only admit refugees who can fully and appropriately assimilate, thereby ensuring that the U.S. preserves taxpayer resources for its citizens.”⁸

- If confirmed, what metrics will you instruct ORR to use to assess whether a refugee can appropriately assimilate?
- What role do you believe that the administration has in helping to build refugees’ self-sufficiency and integration into their communities?”

Response: The vetting of refugees and other immigration matters is a shared responsibility between the Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security. If confirmed, I will support ACF efforts to provide appropriate services to refugees within our mission parameters.

Question 4: The Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008 requires HHS to ensure counsel and protections for unaccompanied children to the greatest extent practicable.⁹

- If confirmed, what is your vision to maximize legal representation of unaccompanied children in Georgia and nationwide.
- If confirmed, what safeguards will you implement to help prevent, combat, and ensure accountability for any potential abuse and/ or mistreatment of unaccompanied children while in ORR custody?

Response: If confirmed, I will uphold the law and subsequent legal and privacy protections for the children in ORR custody.

Question 5: From October 2024 to June 2025, the average length of care of unaccompanied children in ORR custody increased from 67 to 174 days.¹⁰

⁷ The One Big Beautiful Bill Act, Pub. L. No. 119 - 21.

⁸ *Fiscal Year 2026 Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committee*, Department of Health and Human Services, <https://acf.gov/sites/default/files/documents/olab/ACF-FY-2026-CJ-for-web.pdf>. at 163

⁹ William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protections Reauthorization Act of 2008, Pub. L. 110 – 457.

¹⁰ Referrals Data, Office of Refugee Resettlement, An Office of the Administration for Children and Families (July 15, 2025), <https://acf.gov/orr/about/ucs/facts-and-data>.

- If confirmed, what actions will you take to reduce these detention periods while ensuring safe sponsor placements for children released from ORR custody?

Response: Safeguarding children, especially those in HHS custody, should remain a primary responsibility for ORR. A child welfare principle I will apply in this role is safety first, because safe and timely release must promote public safety and must ensure that sponsors are able to provide for the well-being of children, and I look forward to understanding and potentially building on the reforms Secretary Kennedy has made to improve sponsor vetting in ORR.

Question 6: Head Start is a federally funded, locally administered program that provides comprehensive services for children from families with low incomes, particularly in rural areas.¹¹ One in four child care slots in rural Georgia are Head Start slots and the vast majority of children served by Head Start have parents who work outside the home.¹² As a Head Start alum, I know first-hand of the importance of this program.

- If confirmed, what is your vision for the future of Head Start?
- During your confirmation hearing, you mentioned that you agree with Secretary Kennedy’s goal of making Head Start “bigger and brighter”. Can you describe you envision this will entail if you are confirmed?
- If confirmed, how do you plan to support strengthening Head Start’s role in promoting school readiness?
- If confirmed, how do you plan to address gaps in access to Early Head Start, especially in rural communities?
- What are your thoughts on the role that Head Start providers play, and if confirmed how will you support the program?
- If confirmed, how do you plan to balance the need for affordable child care options with the need for children who are in child care to be both safe and in environments that support their early learning needs?
- If confirmed, how do you plan to address the ongoing workforce challenges in Head Start such as low pay, high turnover, and burnout?
- If confirmed, will you commit to hosting town halls, roundtables, and even visiting Head Start programs in Georgia?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to assessing the needs of the Head Start program, providing proper oversight, and developing clear guidance for the program—all while making the program an excellent way for children to learn the skills they need to thrive during their subsequent education.

¹¹ *Head Start Services*, The Office of Head Start, An Office of the Administration for Children and Families (Feb. 26, 2025), <https://acf.gov/ohs/about/head-start>.

¹² Hanah Goldber and Jessica Woltjen, *Early Head Start and Head Start in Georgia*, Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students, <https://geears.org/wp-content/uploads/Head-Start-One-Pager.pdf>.

Question 7: Last year, ACF updated regulation related to the Child Care Development Fund to help working families afford child care, increase child care options for families, and improve payment policies for child care providers, many of which are small businesses.¹³

- If confirmed, will you commit to keeping these regulations in place to support child care quality and access?
- With families struggling under the burden of high living costs, how do you envision states may leverage Temporary Assistance for Needy Families waivers to provide more effective support?
- If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring that there is a public comment period for parents and providers before any regulatory changes take effect?
- If confirmed, will you commit to coming to Georgia and meeting with child care providers prior to making any significant regulatory decisions?

Response: If confirmed, I commit to reviewing this final rule. I also look forward to reviewing the CCDF program and making assessments based on needs and available resources.

Question 8: Secretary Kennedy has advocated changes in diet and eating habits to improve health - such as avoiding sugar and processed foods and substituting fresh foods and vegetables. Eating habits are mostly formed early in life.¹⁴ Local Head Start programs operate on very limited budgets, which restrict the availability of funding for fresh foods and other expensive elements of a healthy diet.

- If confirmed, how will you help Head Start grantees procure healthy foods and promote healthy eating habits for the children they serve?
- If confirmed, will you commit to providing additional funding to Head Start programs to support the Secretary's goal to promote healthy eating?

Response: Nutrition is an important component of Secretary Kennedy's Make America Healthy Again strategy. Healthy eating practices will result in healthier children—which will increase the likelihood of a healthy adulthood for Head Start participants.

Question 9: President Trump's Budget Request for FY26 includes funding for Head Start, but at the same levels as FY24 and FY25.¹⁵ Unfortunately, level funding for a third consecutive year, without accounting for inflation, workforce competition, or increased needs, is effectively a cut,

¹³ CCDF Improving Child Care Access, Affordability, and Stability in the Child Care and Development Fund Final Rule, 45 C.F.R. § 98.

¹⁴ Madeline Halpert, *Can RFK Jr Make America's Diet Healthy Again*, BBC (Feb. 13, 2025), <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cze391y17z7o>.

¹⁵ Amanda Guarino, *Overview: White House Budget Request, FY2026*, First Five Years Fund (June 17, 2025), <https://www.fff.org/resources/2025/06/overview-white-house-budget-request-fy2026/>.

meaning some programs will be forced to make impossible choices, including reducing enrollment, cutting hours, or laying off staff.¹⁶ With Head Start programs struggling to recruit and retain qualified staff, threatening classroom stability, and limiting access for income-eligible children, a funding increase – even a small one – in FY26 is critical. Early childhood educators like those at Head Start are some of the lowest-paid workers in the country, and stagnant wages are driving workforce shortages that impact many of the children currently enrolled and thousands more on waiting lists.¹⁷

- Do you support an increase in funding for Head Start, which would help programs offer competitive pay and keep classrooms open?
- You have testified that you will support Head Start and that you are committed to ensuring the program's success. How will you ensure that the closures of the five of the ten regional offices do not disrupt access to Head Start for families and children?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to ensuring adequate staffing to meet the needs of the Head Start program.

¹⁶ *Confronting Head Starts Workforce Crisis*, National Head Start Association, <https://nhsa.org/resource/confronting-head-starts-workforce-crisis/>.

¹⁷ *Early Childhood Workforce Index 2024*, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/workforce-index-2024/executive-summary/key-findings>.