

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 27, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Kennedy,

We write in strong opposition to the RIF notice of dozens of workers within the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health's (NIOSH) Pittsburgh Mining Research Division (PMRD), whose purpose, is "to eliminate mining fatalities, injuries, and illnesses across all mining sectors."<sup>1</sup> We urge you to fully and immediately rescind the RIF notice with a termination date of July 2, 2025 of these workers to ensure their important work to ensure miners' safety can continue without further disruption.

As you are aware, on April 1, 2025, the Department of Health and Human Services initiated a reduction in force (RIF) at NIOSH, placing upwards of 90 percent of the agency's staff on administrative leave and effectively halting multiple coal miner health and safety programs. Following a lawsuit by coal miners, on May 13, 2025, a federal judge issued a preliminary injunction ordering your department to reverse the RIFs affecting the Respiratory Health Division within NIOSH, such as the Coal Worker Health Surveillance Program (CWHSP) and the National Personal Protective Technology Laboratory (NPPTL), and to immediately resume all legally mandated work under the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act. As U.S. District Judge Irene Berger wrote in her decision, "Losing the services of these experienced and dedicated employees is an aspect of the irreparable harm to the miners and the public that cannot and should not be ignored."<sup>2</sup>

Despite also being essential to safeguarding worker health and safety, PMRD, a part of NIOSH's Mining Program, was not covered by the court's injunction. Accordingly, these workers remain on administrative leave and PMRD's work remains paused. PMRD's workers conduct cutting-edge research to minimize the dangers miners face, such as studies into preventing mine explosions, reducing toxic dust exposure, improving ventilation, and testing the structural stability of underground environments, among other areas. They operate the only federally maintained experimental coal mines in the country, along with advanced labs that simulate real-world mining conditions.

Together, with CWHSP, which screens coal miners for black lung disease, and NPPTL, which tests and certifies the respirators that protect workers in hazardous environments, PMRD is part of a coordinated federal ecosystem focused on a core mission: keeping miners alive, healthy, and protected on the job. That mission cannot be achieved if any part of the system is dismantled.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/divisions-offices/pittsburgh-mining.html>

<sup>2</sup> Wiley v. Kennedy Jr., No. 2:25-cv-00227, at 27 (S.D.W. Va. May 13, 2025) (injunction order)

PMRD is neither duplicative nor expendable. Its proven track record of advancing mine safety and productivity is essential to ensuring a robust American coal mining industry and protecting the livelihoods of thousands of families who depend on that industry. Just as it was essential to bring back the workers at CWHSP and NPPTL, it is equally urgent to return the PMRD workforce to their posts.

Again, we urge you to fully and immediately reinstate PMRD workers.

Very respectfully,



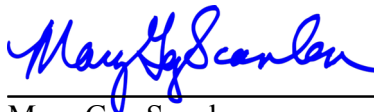
Chris Deluzio  
Member of Congress



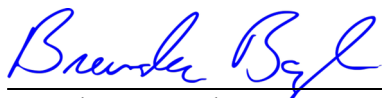
Summer L. Lee  
Member of Congress



Chrissy Houlahan  
Member of Congress



Mary Gay Scanlon  
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