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## **NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **AG Kaul sues HHS, Sec. Kennedy to Overturn Public Health Grant Cuts**

MADISON, Wis. – Attorney General Josh Kaul joined a coalition of 23 states and the District of Columbia in filing a [lawsuit](#) against the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., for abruptly terminating approximately \$11 billion in critical public health grants to the states.

The grant terminations, which came with no warning or legally valid explanation, have caused disruption for state health agencies that continue to rely on these critical funds for a wide range of urgent public health needs such as infectious disease management, fortifying emergency preparedness, providing mental health and substance abuse services, and modernizing public health infrastructure.

Wisconsin stands to lose more than \$235 million from these cancellations by HHS. If the funding is not restored, important state public health programs and initiatives will have to be dissolved or disbanded, including various substance abuse prevention and treatment programs; projects to expand rural health initiatives and to improve EMS infrastructure throughout the state; community mental health services; projects to improve state, tribal, and local responses to public health crises; infectious disease research; and pan-coronavirus vaccine development.

The HHS cuts threaten the urgent public health needs of states around the country at a time when emerging disease threats—such as measles and bird flu—are on the rise, Attorney General Kaul warned.

“These massive, sudden cuts would significantly ratchet up the Trump administration’s attack on programs that support the health and well-being of the

American people,” said AG Kaul. “It should go without saying that sacrificing our health to help fund tax cuts for the wealthy is deeply wrong.”

Congress authorized and appropriated new and increased funding for these grants in COVID-19-related legislation to support critical public health needs. Many of these grants are from specific programs created by Congress, such as block grants to states for mental health and substance abuse and addiction services. Yet, with no legal authority or explanation, Secretary Kennedy’s HHS agencies on March 24 arbitrarily terminated these grants “for cause” effective immediately claiming that the pandemic is over and the grants are no longer necessary.

In their lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court in Rhode Island, the coalition of attorneys general assert that the mass terminations violate federal law because the end of the pandemic is not a “for cause” basis for ending the grants. HHS’ position, up until a few days ago, was that the end of the pandemic did not affect the availability of these grant funds. Moreover, for some of the grants, termination “for cause” is not a permissible basis for termination, yet the federal government unlawfully terminated them.

With this lawsuit, Attorney General Kaul and the coalition are seeking a temporary restraining order to invalidate Secretary Kennedy’s and HHS’ mass grant terminations in the suing states, arguing that the actions violate the Administrative Procedure Act. The states are also asking the court to prevent HHS from maintaining or reinstating the terminations and any agency actions implementing them.

Attorney General Phil Weiser of Colorado, Attorney General Rob Bonta of California, Attorney General Keith Ellison of Minnesota, Attorney General Peter Neronha of Rhode Island, and Attorney General Nick Brown of Washington are co-leading the litigation. They are joined by the attorneys general of Arizona, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, and Wisconsin, and the Governors of Kentucky and Pennsylvania.