

December 20, 2024

The Honorable Jim Jones
Deputy Commissioner for Human
Foods Food and Drug
Administration
10903 New Hampshire
Avenue Silver Spring, MD
20993-0002

Dear Deputy Commissioner Jones,

We write to you out of concern that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) appears poised to significantly reduce funding for state and local food safety programs. As you know, state and local programs are the backbone of our food safety system. They perform the majority of food inspections reported by FDA, including 50% of food processing facility inspections, 90% of produce safety inspections, and 100% of retail food inspections. These inspections are carried out at a significantly lower cost to taxpayers than if FDA had conducted them directly.

Recognizing state and local programs' invaluable role in ensuring a safe food supply, the House and Senate included report language in their FY 25 draft appropriations bills directing FDA to maintain funding for state and local programs. If the agency refuses, we are concerned that these proposed cuts will undo years of progress toward establishing a truly integrated food safety system. State budgets across the country are already stretched thin, these cuts would deleteriously impact our nation's food safety system as some state programs inevitably scale back or are eliminated completely.

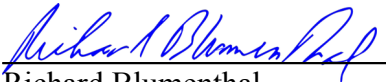
While we appreciate that you may need to occasionally reallocate resources based on programmatic needs, we are concerned that the full impact of the proposed cuts to state and local programs has not been taken into account and that the agency has failed to fully consider alternative options. Therefore, we request your response to the following questions by February 16, 2025:

1. In recent years, FDA has significantly reallocated funding meant for the Office of Inspections and Investigation (OII) formerly Office of Regulatory Affairs' Office of Training, Education, and Development (OTED) by about 65% or \$10 million. Since training of investigators and inspections at the federal, state, and local levels are critical to maintaining the safety of the food supply and other FDA regulated products, funding cuts to this Office are concerning.

- a. Please provide additional information on where these funds have been reallocated to, the reason for the reallocation.
2. With the proposed \$34 million reduction to state and local programs, has OII and the Human Foods Program (HFP) determined which state-led food safety initiatives will no longer be funded and how these activities will be handled by current OII/HFP staff?
3. What activities has the agency undertaken to revise processes, reduce bureaucracy, and improve efficiency during the implementation of the new HFP that now includes OII?
4. For OII/ORA foods staff, please provide additional detail on the number and cost of the following:
 - a. Investigator positions for domestic inspections (excluding imports),
 - b. Investigator positions for foreign inspection (excluding imports),
 - c. Employees supervisory staff at the GS14 and equivalent SES and Title 21 positions and pay history of each employee for the last 3 fiscal years (excluding imports).
5. Has the agency cross referenced the functions and responsibilities of the HFP with OII to determine what programs are no longer necessary? Has the agency determined what programs can be cut with minimal public health impacts?
 - a. If so, please describe the agency's decision to instead target crucial state programs for cuts.

Thank you for your prompt response. We look forward to working with you on this issue to ensure there are adequate resources to protect our food supply.

Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator