

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

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

May 29, 2026

Dear Secretary Kennedy,

We write today to urge you to consider adding new cancer screenings to the tests covered by the World Trade Center Health Program (WTCHP). As strong supporters of this program and as we approach the 25th anniversary of 9/11, we share in your commitment to ensuring the best care possible for 9/11 responders and survivors.

As you know, we recently spearheaded the bipartisan effort to provide lifetime funding for the WTCHP. This policy was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Trump this past February. By permanently fixing the program's funding formula, we are providing certainty for the 9/11 community. Instead of focusing on future funding mechanisms or bureaucracy, we can focus on further improving this program, which has a proven track record of success.

The 2021 NIOSH study on the WTCHP showcased how it's operating as intended. It detailed that responders in the program have a 5-year cancer survival rate of 86%, compared to non-WTC New York State residents, who have only a 5-year cancer survival rate of 63%. Data from another study published earlier this year shows a 13% increase in survival for program members as compared to non-members.

We want to suggest a way to build on that success.

Currently, the World Trade Center Health Program follows the U.S. Preventative Task Force recommendations on cancer screening, without making exceptions for the 9/11 population and the increased cancer risks they face. In light of this circumstance, we hope you will consider providing enhanced cancer screenings for program participants, specifically for prostate and skin cancers.

PSA Testing

For the 9/11 community, studies have shown that the incidence of prostate cancer is 19% to 40% greater for rescue and recovery workers than for the general population. More concerning is the fact that responders with greater WTC exposure are diagnosed with prostate cancer in more advanced clinical stages.

Prostate cancer remains one of the most diagnosed cancers in the WTCHP at 12,050 cases total. Since risk increases with age, especially for men over 50, early screening and detection is

crucial, particularly in groups at increased risk. Prostate cancer can be slow-growing and early symptoms may not always appear; thus, routine screenings are important. According to guidelines set by the American Urological Association, when screening for prostate cancer, clinicians should offer the prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood test as the first screening test for men aged 45 to 50 years of age. We encourage you to offer this screening test to any survivor who requests it.

Skin Cancer Examinations

The World Trade Center attack exposed rescue and recovery workers and survivors to harmful substances, leading this population to have a higher risk of melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancers. Studies have shown that 9/11 responders have a 9% to 43% increased risk for melanoma, linked to their toxic exposures.

Due to the increased risk of this population, skin cancer is officially recognized and covered by the WTCHP. Non-melanoma skin cancer is the #1 cancer certification for enrolled WTCHP cohort members, with almost 17,000 cases reported. With such a high number of cases, timely screening is crucial.

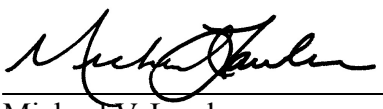
The National Cancer Institute recommends regular self-examination for non-symptomatic individuals to identify new or abnormal moles or areas. Annual screening with a health professional is recommended for those who are at higher risk or have already been diagnosed with skin cancer. Given the increased rates of melanoma skin cancer in the 9/11 population, adding annual skin cancer screening should be included as a covered service.

We strongly urge you to review these two cancer screening tests and subsequently add them to the WTCHP program requirements.

We were all grateful for your recent decision to allow the program to hire additional staff to meet the growing demands on the program. We would hope that you can continue to show strong support for this program by considering these enhanced cancer screening steps.

Now that the program is fully funded, we must focus our attention on making sure we are doing everything we can for those exposed to the toxins at Ground Zero, the Pentagon and the Shanksville crash site. Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we look forward to working with you on this initiative.

Sincerely,



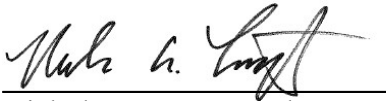
Michael V. Lawler
Member of Congress



Andrew R. Garbarino
Member of Congress



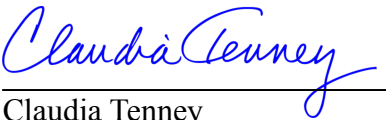
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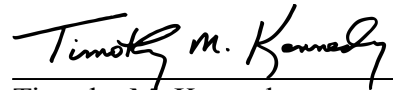
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



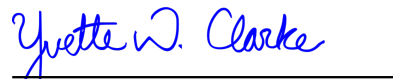
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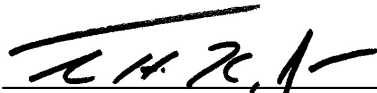
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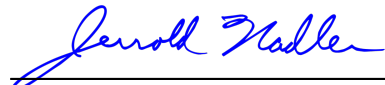
Thomas H. Kean, Jr.
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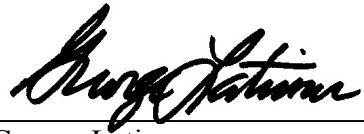
Josh Gottheimer
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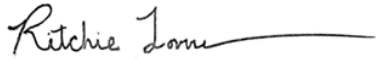
Jerrold Nadler
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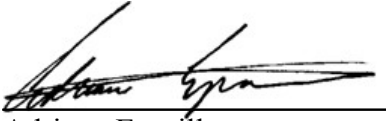
Josh Riley
Member of Congress



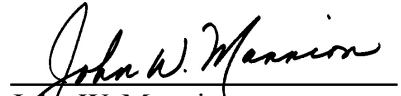
Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress



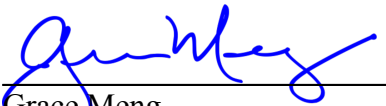
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