

Quotes from plaintiff organizations and co-counsel for *RICCF v. Kennedy* can be found below.

Plaintiffs

“It is deeply regrettable that we must join this suit to protect the children and families our members serve,” said **Tanja Kubas-Meyer, Executive Director of the Rhode Island Coalition for Children and Families**. “Our members provide critical social and health services to protect children, support youth and families, and help Rhode Islanders through their most difficult moments. Federal funding should support children and families’ needs and not be conditioned on ideological restrictions that conflict with providers’ missions and obligations. We are taking this step because all children and families deserve access to the care, support, and resources they need to thrive.”

“The issue for Community Care Alliance is that no federal health and human service funding should be predicated on language that discriminates against anyone in need of services due to their race, gender identity or immigration status. We believe that this is not only unlawful, immoral but that it is cruel and contrary to HHS’ mission over several decades. Owing to the needs of the vulnerable populations served by HHS funding, we hope the court sends a strong message that this type of discriminatory language cannot be used to shape the operations of human service providers,” said **Benedict F. Lessing, Jr., President/CEO, Community Care Alliance**.

“Survivors deserve access to safety and support without unnecessary barriers, yet, these harmful restrictions imposed by the Department of Health and Human Services threaten that fundamental principle. By targeting inclusive services, efforts to address racial disparities, and proven approaches to supporting survivors of abuse, these conditions would disproportionately harm Black and Brown communities, immigrants, undocumented individuals, LGBTQIA+ people, and other vulnerable communities who already face significant barriers to safety and support. They would force organizations to choose between critical federal funding and the integrity of the work we do. For survivors of domestic violence, that could mean fewer pathways to safe housing, essential services, and the support needed to rebuild their lives. We remain determined to protect the systems and resources survivors depend on and to ensure that all survivors are treated with dignity and respect,” said the **Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence**.

“We refuse to accept any grant conditions that deny trans and other marginalized survivors the support they need to heal. Together with the other state coalitions and plaintiff organizations, we’re joining this lawsuit to protect California’s safety net for survivors. This includes housing options, safety planning, counseling, and other life-saving services,” said **Krista Colón, Executive Director, California Partnership to End Domestic Violence**

“At a time when sexual violence is very much in the public’s eye, it is beyond cruel for the administration to continue to attack and limit critical funding for survivor services. All survivors, especially those who are being targeted because of their identities—LGBTQIA+, people of color, immigrants—deserve, and are legally entitled to, access to essential services provided by our member programs. CCASA will continue to fight against these unlawful changes, which go against the principles written into legislation like the Violence Against Women Act, and the

values upon which our work is founded,” said **Brie Franklin, Executive Director, Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault.**

“Ensuring survivors have access to services without discrimination and defending protections for survivors is integral to achieving our mission of replacing domestic violence with human dignity,” said **Dawn Dalton, Executive Director at the District of Columbia Coalition Against Domestic Violence.** “Domestic violence continues to be an epidemic in the U.S., with higher-than-the-national-average rates of abuse here in Washington, DC. At a time when more resources for prevention and support are needed, it is shameful that the life-saving programs survivors rely on are under constant attack.”

“Our work has always been—and remains—dedicated to supporting all survivors. The idea that our government would expect us to restrict access to services and turn away many who need help is reprehensible and unlawful. The restrictions in the grant conditions make it impossible for us to help the most vulnerable. HHS should provide care to everyone, without the exclusion of many survivors and their children,” said **Jan Christiansen, Executive Director, Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence.**

“It is unconscionable to force organizations to choose between receiving federal funding and truly serving their communities. These priorities would require us and our partners to turn away or sideline the very people we exist to help, and we believe they are unlawful. Caring for one another and looking after the whole community is at the heart of how we work and how Hawai‘i shows up for its people. These priorities run against that,” said **Angelina Mercado, Executive Director, Hawai‘i State Coalition Against Domestic Violence.**

“Every survivor of sexual assault and domestic violence deserves access to safety, support, and the services they need. These unlawful federal funding restrictions threaten the ability of Iowa victim service organizations to respond to the diverse needs of survivors. Federal funding should strengthen our ability to support survivors, not force us to choose between fulfilling our mission or maintaining critical resources,” said **Dr. Maria Corona, CEO, Violence Free Iowa.**

“Every survivor deserves support that honors who they are and supports their freedom to build a life beyond abuse and violence. Grant conditions that exclude, demean, erase, or dehumanize trans survivors, immigrant survivors, and other marginalized communities undermine that goal and roll back our collective commitment to meet survivors’ needs. We are continuing this fight alongside our fellow coalitions and partners because a safer, healthier, freer Massachusetts depends on all survivors having access to safety, healing, and support,” said **Hema Sarang-Sieminski, Executive Director, Jane Doe Inc.**

“All people have the right to be treated with respect and provided trauma-informed services that center their dignity and personal agency in times of crisis. Federal funds have been the essential foundation for inclusive and affirming services for decades, and uncountable lives have been saved as a result. Restricting access to domestic violence services through unlawful and discriminatory grant requirements is wrong, jeopardizing services for the most vulnerable people in our communities, those most needing our open doors and advocacy to survive,” said **Francine Garland Stark, Executive Director, Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence.**

“All survivors need more pathways to safety, not more barriers. And victim service programs are already stretched thin. The North Carolina Criminal Justice Analysis Center’s new report, ‘Justice Analysis Review: Reported Domestic and Family Violence in North Carolina,’ underscores the stakes: domestic violence is a factor in 42% of reported violent interpersonal crimes in our state. NCCADV is joining this legal action because programs should never have to choose between keeping their funding and fulfilling their mission to serve all survivors,” said **Carianne Fisher, Executive Director of North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence.**

“Our counties in the Commonwealth depend on programs being able to serve people based on their needs, not political grandstanding. These unlawful restrictions threaten to undermine decades of progress in supporting survivors and ensuring access to critical services. Our coalitions across the country must stand united in protecting the people we serve and ensuring that federal funding fulfills its intended purpose of helping all communities thrive,” said **Susan Higginbotham, CEO of Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence.**

“VALOR stands for providing services to all survivors of sexual violence and support all communities to take actions to prevent sexual violence; VALOR stands against the federal government’s attempts to restrict how and to whom these crucial services can be provided to,” said **David Lee, Deputy Director, ValorUS.**

“The Vermont Network and its Member Organizations have served victims of domestic and sexual violence victims in our small, rural state for over 40 years. We are committed to serving all victims of domestic and sexual violence who need advocacy and support. We join our fellow litigants to ensure that domestic and sexual violence agencies in Vermont do not need to choose between accessing essential federal funding to support their work and serving all survivors in our state,” said **Sarah Robinson, Co-Executive Director of the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence.**

“These unlawful conditions force Virginia’s local sexual and domestic violence agencies to choose between serving all survivors in their communities and accessing the federal funding essential to providing lifesaving and life-stabilizing services. Agencies need both the resources to sustain their work and the ability to serve survivors in ways informed by decades of experience and expertise. By threatening both, these unlawful conditions undermine agencies’ ability to meet survivors’ needs and jeopardize the safety and well-being of survivors across Virginia,” said **Kristi VanAudenhoove, Executive Director of the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance.**

“Victim service programs work every day to keep communities safe. Sexual assault and domestic violence programs help survivors of abuse from all walks of life. This keeps all of us safer – families, neighborhoods, and the whole community. Violence doesn’t check IDs, and safety shouldn’t either. Federal funding should help survivors not harm them. That is why we have joined this legal action,” said **Judy Chen, executive director, Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.**

“As a statewide coalition, WCASA works to advance systemic change and support a network of programs serving survivors across Wisconsin. We cannot fulfill that mission if we are forced to compromise our values or abandon the most marginalized survivors – particularly BIPOC, LGBTQ+, immigrant, and people with disabilities – who are disproportionately impacted by sexual violence and face increased barriers to safety, healing, and justice. Our mission requires we stand alongside our partners to protect the ability of organizations to provide inclusive, survivor-centered services and advance the social change necessary to end sexual violence,” said **Amanda Dotson and Kelly Moe Litke, Co-Executive Directors of WCASA.**

Counsel

“These unconstitutional conditions are insidious to democracy, and violate the Constitution by forcing hundreds of non-profit organizations to accept vague, politically motivated conditions Congress never intended for,” said **Skye Perryman, President and CEO of Democracy Forward.** “Further, the grant restrictions were added without any reasoned decision-making or consideration for the impossible situation many of the plaintiffs face, which violates the Administrative Procedure Act. We are honored to work alongside this impressively expansive coalition and to again fight back against this unlawful weaponization of federal funding.”

“Once again, the federal government is attaching unlawful strings to federal funds,” said **Amy Romero, Chief Legal Counsel of Lawyers’ Committee for Rhode Island.** “Yet also once again, courageous nonprofits are challenging the unlawfulness of these conditions. LCRI is proud to represent Rhode Island Coalition for Children and Families, Community Care Alliance, and Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence, as well as the many other plaintiffs from around the country, who refuse to betray their missions and their clients.”

“This latest unlawful attempt to overhaul the grant funding requirements clearly undermines the important work of these organizations, including the three that provide fundamental services for Rhode Islanders who are struggling,” said **Steven Brown, executive director of the ACLU of RI.** “These restrictions are incredibly broad and put grant applicants between a rock and a hard place: They can choose to apply and accept restrictions that are counter to their own missions or not apply, lose the grant funding, and be unable to support the people in their communities. We are hopeful the court will rule these restrictions are unlawful.”