

March 3, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Kennedy:

I write regarding your recent actions — taken almost immediately after your confirmation as Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) — that endanger public health by undermining vaccines and vaccine production. You took these actions even as a measles epidemic resulted in the death of a Texas child — the first such death in this country in nearly a decade.¹ You were an anti-vaccine crusader before becoming HHS Secretary,² and now appear to be continuing that crusade while in office — risking deadly consequences for the American public.

In advance of your narrow³ Senate confirmation vote last month, you made several vaccine-related commitments to obtain the support needed to assuage concerns about your history of outrageous anti-vaccine advocacy. You promised that you would “maintain the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices [(ACIP)] without changes”⁴ and that you would “base vaccine recommendations on data-driven, evidence-based, and medically sound research.”⁵ However, your recent actions have indicated that you do not appear to be living up to those commitments.

On February 20, *Politico* reported that you have already begun planning to replace members of ACIP — the committee that “advise[s] the federal government on vaccine approvals,” “feed[ing] concerns across the broader public health establishment that [you] could undermine Americans’

¹ ABC News, “Some experts question RFK Jr. calling measles outbreak ‘not unusual,’” Cheyenne Haslett, Youri Benadjaoud, and Will McDuffie, February 27, 2025, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/experts-question-rfk-jr-calling-measles-outbreak-unusual/story?id=119221816>.

² New York Times, “Senate Confirms Kennedy, a Prominent Vaccine Skeptic, as Health Secretary,” Sheryl Gay Stolberg, February 13, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/13/us/rfk-jr-hhs-senate-confirmation.html>.

³ *Id.*

⁴ Office of U.S. Senator Bill Cassidy, “Cassidy Delivers Floor Speech in Support of RFK, Jr. to be HHS Secretary,” press release, <https://www.cassidy.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/cassidy-delivers-floor-speech-in-support-of-rfk-jr-to-be-hhs-secretary>.

⁵ New York Times, “Senate Confirms Kennedy, a Prominent Vaccine Skeptic, as Health Secretary,” Sheryl Gay Stolberg, February 13, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/13/us/rfk-jr-hhs-senate-confirmation.html>.

trust in vaccines.”⁶ You then “postponed” ACIP’s first scheduled meeting during your tenure as HHS Secretary, without rescheduling it for a later date.⁷ During that three-day meeting, ACIP had been scheduled to “discuss[] and [take] votes related to vaccines for HPV, RSV, influenza and Lyme disease, among other topics.”⁸

And last week, reports indicated that you have cancelled the next meeting of the Vaccine and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee (VRBPAC), scheduled for March 13, in which the Food and Drug Administration (FDA)’s vaccine experts had been scheduled to select the flu strains to be included in the 2025-26 flu vaccine.⁹ This is a highly unusual action: the meeting “has occurred every year since the late 1960s.”¹⁰ And it is dangerous: the inability of VRBPAC to produce a recommendation may delay the manufacturing of flu vaccines or force the FDA to produce recommendations without appropriate expert consideration from U.S. experts. As one expert noted, “the stakes are incredibly high.”¹¹ The flu is estimated to kill between 6,000 and 52,000 Americans each year;¹² and interfering with the timely production of a safe and effective flu vaccine will endanger thousands — particularly children and seniors, who are most likely to die or become hospitalized due to the flu.

These “back-to-back high-level disruptions in vaccine policy”¹³ were not your only dangerous moves. You are chairing a “Make America Healthy Again” commission, created by President Trump, that appears to be designed to undermine confidence in vaccines; you declared that the commission will investigate the “childhood vaccine schedule” and that “nothing is going to be off limits.”¹⁴

Even your March 2 op-ed responding to the growing measles outbreak in Texas failed to contain a strong call for vaccination, undercutting any support by noting that “parents should consult with

⁶ Politico, “RFK Jr. prepares shake-up of vaccine advisors,” Adam Cancryn, Lauren Gardner, and David Lim, February 20, 2025, <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/02/20/kennedy-prepares-shakeup-of-vaccine-advisers-00205223>.

⁷ NPR, “First CDC vaccine meeting under Trump administration is postponed,” Will Stone, February 20, 2025, <https://www.npr.org/sections/shots-health-news/2025/02/20/nx-s1-5304233/cdc-vaccine-meeting-delayed>.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ New York Times, “F.D.A. Cancels Meeting of Vaccine Experts Scheduled to Advise on Flu Shots,” Sheryl Gay Stolberg, and Christina Jewett, February 26, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/26/us/politics/fda-flu-vaccine.html>.

¹⁰ TIME, “‘We Were Told Nothing.’ What to Know About the Canceled Meeting to Discuss the Next Flu Shot,” Alice Park, February 27, 2025, <https://time.com/7262388/fda-flu-vaccine-meeting-canceled>.

¹¹ New York Times, “F.D.A. Cancels Meeting of Vaccine Experts Scheduled to Advise on Flu Shots,” Sheryl Gay Stolberg, and Christina Jewett, February 26, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/26/us/politics/fda-flu-vaccine.html>.

¹² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Flu Burden,” <https://www.cdc.gov/flu-burden/php/about/index.html>.

¹³ BioSpace, “Meeting of FDA’s Vaccines Advisory Panel Canceled as Kennedy Settles Into HHS,” Tristan Manalac, February 27, 2025, <https://www.biospace.com/policy/meeting-of-fdas-vaccines-advisory-panel-canceled-as-kennedy-settle-into-hhs>.

¹⁴ The Hill, “RFK Jr. eyes childhood vaccine schedule review, says ‘nothing off limits’ in HHS meeting,” Nathaniel Weixel, February 19, 2025, <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/5153260-new-commission-maha-childhood-vaccine-schedule/amp>.

their healthcare providers to understand their options to get the MMR vaccine,” and that “the decision to vaccinate is a personal one.”¹⁵

And finally, last week, your agency announced that it is “reevaluating” its funding agreement with Moderna for an mRNA-based bird flu vaccine.¹⁶

A deadly measles epidemic is raging in Texas.¹⁷ The nation is in the midst of its deadliest flu epidemic in 15 years, which has already killed at least 19,000 Americans.¹⁸ And experts are becoming increasingly concerned about the spillover of the H5N1 bird flu into humans, and the potential for a deadly pandemic.¹⁹ These are dangerous times for public health – and your irresponsible and reckless efforts to undermine the nation’s vaccine policy threaten to fan the flames of disaster.

The mission of the agency you lead is “to enhance the health and well-being of all Americans.”²⁰ You are already failing to do so — and you must reverse course immediately.

In light of your efforts to undermine the federal government’s responsibilities to provide evidence-based vaccination guidelines and ensure access to lifesaving vaccines, I seek more information on your intentions regarding vaccine policy. Therefore, I request you provide answers to the following questions by March 10, 2025:

1. In your March 2nd op-ed responding to the Texas measles outbreak, which has already killed one unvaccinated child, you failed to include a strong call for vaccinations. Instead, you claimed that “good nutrition remains a best defense against most chronic and infectious diseases.”²¹ Do you believe good nutrition is a better defense against measles than the MMR vaccine?
2. Will you change course and tell American parents to vaccinate their children to protect against measles, yes or no?

¹⁵ Fox News, “Robert F. Kennedy Jr.: Measles outbreak is call to action for all of us,” Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., March 2, 2025, <https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/robert-f-kennedy-jr-measles-outbreak-call-action-all-us>.

¹⁶ Reuters, “Trump administration weighs pulling funding for Moderna bird flu vaccine, Bloomberg News reports,” February 6, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/trump-administration-weighs-pulling-funding-moderna-bird-flu-vaccine-bloomberg-2025-02-27>.

¹⁷ ABC News, “Some experts question RFK Jr. calling measles outbreak ‘not unusual’,” Cheyenne Haslett, Youri Benadjaoud, and Will McDuffie, February 27, 2025, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/experts-question-rfk-jr-calling-measles-outbreak-unusual/story?id=119221816>.

¹⁸ National Geographic, “This is the worst flu season in 15 years. Here’s why—and how to protect yourself,” Daryl Austin, February 26, 2025, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/high-cases-flu-season>.


¹⁹ Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, “Bird Flu Is Raising Red Flags Among Health Officials,” Public Health On Call, January 14, 2025, <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2025/bird-flu-is-raising-red-flags-among-health-officials>.

²⁰ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “About HHS,” <https://www.hhs.gov/about/index.html>.

²¹ Fox News, “ROBERT F. KENNEDY JR.: Measles outbreak is call to action for all of us,” March 2, 2025, <https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/robert-f-kennedy-jr-measles-outbreak-call-action-all-us>.

3. You indicated prior to your nomination that you would “maintain [ACIP] without changes,”²² yet you plan to remove ACIP members and have already cancelled the first ACIP meeting occurring during your tenure as HHS Secretary. Why did you postpone this meeting?
 - A. When do you intend to reschedule this meeting?
 - B. Do you intend to replace ACIP members? If so, will you replace them with individuals holding anti-vaccine views?
4. Why did you cancel VRBPAC’s March meeting?
5. Do you plan to cancel future VRBPAC meetings?
6. In the absence of input from VRBPAC experts, how will the FDA formulate guidance on which flu strains to protect against in the 2025-26 flu vaccine?
7. Do you plan to replace VRBPAC members?
8. Why have you chosen to allow your “Make America Healthy Again” commission to investigate childhood vaccinations as a potential cause of chronic disease, given the lack of evidence for any link between vaccines and chronic disease?
9. Why have you directed HHS to reevaluate its contract with Moderna for a bird flu vaccine?
10. What impact will this reevaluation have on the availability of a vaccine in the event of a bird flu pandemic?

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

²² Office of U.S. Senator Bill Cassidy, “Cassidy Delivers Floor Speech in Support of RFK, Jr. to be HHS Secretary,” press release, <https://www.cassidy.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/cassidy-delivers-floor-speech-in-support-of-rfk-jr-to-be-hhs-secretary>.