

May 23, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Kennedy:

We, the undersigned medical, public health, and patient support organizations, write to share our concern about a critical milestone reached last week – more than 1,000 confirmed cases of measles being reported by more than 31 jurisdictions. This marker should serve as a clarion call for the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to redouble their efforts to prevent further spread of the disease and assist state and local health departments in their efforts to respond as measles cases continue to grow. This is especially true as experts and public health officials are concerned that the confirmed cases could represent a significant undercount.ⁱ If we do not act immediately, the United States risks losing more lives as well as our measles elimination status gained 25 years ago through robust vaccination.

We know that having trusted voices making a strong recommendation for people to receive the measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine is the best and most effective way to stop this outbreak. We appreciate your April statement to this effect. However, it is essential that leadership at HHS and CDC speak unequivocally and in a unified voice encouraging Americans to receive the MMR vaccine.

While there have been some statements from you and your Department encouraging people to get the MMR vaccine, there have also been numerous assertions that cast doubt on the value of the vaccine, and touted untested, alternative treatments for measles like cod liver oil, clarithromycin, and budesonide. Some have also touted the use of vitamin A in a way that is out of context with current clinical recommendations, which has led to inappropriate use and dosing that can cause further harm.

All these mixed messages are taking a toll. A recent tracking survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation showed that most adults, including most parents, have heard one or more false claims about measles or the MMR vaccine.ⁱⁱ The survey showed that while fewer than 5% of adults say they think each claim is “definitely true,” less than half identify each as “definitely false.”

Lower vaccination rates put communities at risk of losing community immunity, which helps protect those who are not yet fully vaccinated or who cannot be vaccinated, including children and adults who have cancer and are immunosuppressed. Moving forward, we call on HHS and CDC to increase its promotion of the MMR vaccine and provide information on measles that is grounded in evidence-based science.

We also call on HHS and CDC to reverse some of the Reduction in Force (RIFs) and federal funding rescissions that have taken place and are undermining the federal response to the measles outbreak. These are positions and funding streams that help support state, local and territorial health programs respond to outbreaks. Because of these earlier decisions by HHS and

CDC, we have witnessed immunization clinics closing in Texas and elsewhere despite the measles outbreak.

We further call for the reinstatement of the Immunization Services Division Partnership Branch at the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD) and the rehiring of support personnel at CDC that can be deployed to affected jurisdictions. Measles outbreak responses are labor- and resource-intensive and much of the work falls to local jurisdictions. However, federal health agencies like CDC provide critical support to local and state authorities, including financial resources, medical and epidemiological expertise, and immunizations.

It is also important to note that the measles outbreak is occurring amidst the worst flu season in over a decade. There have been 231 pediatric deaths this flu season, exceeding the previous reporting high for a non-pandemic year. Overall, there have been at least 47 million illnesses, 610,000 hospitalizations, and 27,000 deaths from flu so far this season.ⁱⁱⁱ This is in addition to an increase in pertussis cases last year, where the United States saw more than 35,000 cases reported, the most since 2012.^{iv} Unfortunately, two babies died of pertussis in Louisiana in March, part of 170 cases reported in the state just this year.^v

We are reaching a breaking point. Now is the time to have federal leadership provide a strong, unified message encouraging Americans to get vaccinated, and to provide adequate funding and personnel to ensure local, state, and territorial jurisdictions can respond to the outbreaks, and receive technical, medical, workforce and financial support. We stand ready and willing to work with you to stop this measles outbreak.

Sincerely,

Academic Pediatric Association
AIDS Alliance for Women, Infants, Children, Youth & Families
Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Alaska Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Lung Association
American Pediatric Society
Arizona Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of Immunization Managers
Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs
Big Cities Health Coalition
California Chapter 1 of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Colorado Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
District of Columbia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
First Focus on Children
Florida Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Inc.
Georgia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Gerontological Society of America
Idaho Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Immunize.org

Indiana Immunization Coalition
Infectious Diseases Society of America
Institute for Public Health Innovation
Iowa Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Kansas Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Kentucky Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Louisiana Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Louisiana Families for Vaccines
Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
March of Dimes
Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Massachusetts Families for Vaccines
Mississippi Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Missouri Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
MomsRising
Montana Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Montana Families for Vaccines
National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Foundation for Infectious Diseases
National League for Nursing
Nebraska Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
New Hampshire Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
New Jersey Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
New Mexico Pediatric Society
North Dakota Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Ohio Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Orange County Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society
Pediatric Policy Council
Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Primary Care Development Corporation
Rhode Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
SAFE Communities Coalition
Society for Pediatric Research
Society for Public Health Education
Trust for America's Health
Utah Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Vaccinate Your Family
Vermont Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Virginia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
West Virginia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
West Virginia Families for Immunizations
Wisconsin Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

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- ⁱ <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/cdc-measles-cases-missed-texas-us-rfkjr-rcna201426>
- ⁱⁱ <https://www.kff.org/the-monitor/public-perception-of-measles-vaccines-and-unsubstantiated-treatment-claims-the-monitor/>
- ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.cdc.gov/fluview/surveillance/2025-week-20.html>
- ^{iv} <https://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/php/surveillance/index.html>
- ^v <https://ldh.la.gov/news/measles-whooping-cough-update#:~:text=right%20for%20you.-,Whooping%20cough,reported%20in%20Louisiana%20since%202018.>